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MAY 20 1983

Art 523	History of Science 518
Biography and Memoir 517	Language 524
Commentary 514-15	Politics 507
Diplomacy 519	Reference Books 508-09, 520-22
English Literature 513	Roman Studies 505
Fiction 510, 526	Russian Literature 525
French History 503-04	Social History 511-12
	Social Studies 506

## INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

AASHEIM, ASHLEY <i>The Apostate</i> [John Melmoth]	
ALTES, PETER <i>Wissenschaft, Staat, Mäzene: Anfänge moderner Wissenschaftspolitik in Großbritannien 1850-1920</i> [Paul Kennedy]	
BORKOWSKI, MAROARET, and others <i>Moral Violence: The community response</i> [Helge Rubinstein]	
BORN, NICHOLAS <i>The Deception</i> [Thomas Sutcliffe]	
BOTTORHEIMER, KARL S. <i>Ireland and the Irish: A short history</i> [Roy Foster]	
BOURDIEU, PIERRE <i>Ce que porter veut dire: L'économie des échanges linguistiques</i> [Roy Harris]	
BRINK, C. O. <i>Horace on Poetry: Epistles Book II, The Letters to Augustus and Florus</i> [Francis Cairns]	
CAROUS, NEVILLE <i>The Roses Matches 1919-1939</i> [A. L. Le Quesne]	
CHEVNEVSKY, N. G. <i>What Is To Be Done? Tales about new people</i> [Kyrl Fitz Lyon]	
CHEVALIER, BERNARD <i>Les Bonnes Villes de France du XIVe au XVIe siècle</i> [Eugen Weber]	
CHILBOSS, JAMES F. <i>Moral Responsibility in Conflicts: Essays on nonviolence, war and conscience</i> [Martin Ceadel]	
DAVIES, PAUL and JENNA, and HUXLEY, ANTHONY <i>Wild Orchids of Britain and Europe</i> [William T. Staarn]	
DURKIN, ANDREW R. <i>Sergei Aksakov and Russian Pastoral</i> [Virginia Llewellyn Smith]	
FAIRFIELD, SHEILA <i>The Streets of London: A dictionary of the names and their origins</i> [J. K. L. Walker]	
FORTESCUE, WILLIAM <i>Alphonse de Lamartine: A political biography</i> [Norman Hampson]	
FRECHET, ALICE <i>John Galsworthy: A reassessment</i> [John Batchelor]	
GRABOWICZ, GEORGE G. <i>The Poets of Myrdamir: A study of symbolic meaning in Torms Sevcenko</i> [Arnold McMillin]	
GRAHAM, JORY <i>In the Company of Others</i> [Anne Clitholm]	
GUILLAUMIN, EMILE <i>The Life of a Simple Man</i> [David Coward]	
HALL, JAY L. (Editor) <i>Dictionary of Literary Biography: Volume 14, British Novelists since 1950</i> [Claude Rawson]	
HALPERIN, JOHN (Editor) <i>Trollope Centenary Essays</i> [Jonathan Keesee]	
HARRIES-JENKINS, GWYN (Editor) <i>Armed Forces and the Welfare Societies: Challenges in the 1980s</i> [John Gooch]	
HEIM, ALICE <i>Thicker than Water? Adoption: Its loyalties, pitfalls and joys</i> [Mary Kathleen Bcnet]	
HOFMAN, PAUL <i>Rome: The sweet tempestuous life</i> [Paolo Filo dello Torre]	
HOWE, ELLIC <i>The Black Game: British subversive operations against the Germans during the Second World War</i> [David Hunt]	
INKSTER, IAN, and MORRELL, JACK (Editors) <i>Metropolis and Province: Science in British culture, 1780-1850</i> [D. M. Knight]	
LIEBERT, ROBERT S. <i>Michelangelo: A psychoanalytic study of his life and images</i> [Anthony Storr]	
MORTIMER, PENELOPE <i>The Handmaid</i> [Anne Duchêne]	
OLOSEY, BERNARD (Editor) <i>Dictionary of Literary Biography: Volume 15, British Novelists 1930-1959</i> [Claude Rawson]	
PAPADAMANTIS, ALEXANDROS <i>The Murderer</i> [Gabriel Jostpovici]	
PLACZEK, A. K. (Editor in Chief) <i>The Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects</i> [Stephen Gardiner]	
ROOM, ADRIAN <i>Room's Classical Dictionary: The origins of the names of characters in classical mythology</i> [J. H. C. Leach]	
SHAPIRO, BARBARA J. <i>Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A study of the relationships between natural science, religion, history, law and literature</i> [Roy Porter]	
SIEGHART, PAUL <i>The International Law of Human Rights</i> [Christine Gray]	
SPROAT, IAIN (Editor) <i>The Cricketers' Who's Who 1983</i> [A. L. Le Quesne]	
STAPLETON, MICHAEL <i>The Cambridge Guide to English Literature</i> [Claude Rawson]	
STAPLETON, MICHAEL <i>Monarchs, Rulers, Dynasties and Kingdoms of the World</i> [Steven Runciman]	
THOMAS, KENNETH <i>Man and the Natural World: Changing attitudes in England 1500-1800</i> [Howard Erskine-Hill]	
TROLLOPE, ANTHONY <i>Martin Pay</i> [Jonathan Keesee]	
TRUDGILL, PETER <i>On Dialect: Sociolinguistic and geographical perspectives</i> [R. B. Le Page]	
VAN DER LINDEN, MARCO <i>Atim Jullia and the Scriptwriter</i> [Nicholas Shakespeare]	
VERIER, ANTHONY <i>Through the Looking Glass: British foreign policy in an age of illusions</i> [Keith Jeffery]	
WEINTRAUB, STANLEY (Editor) <i>Dictionary of Literary Biography: Volume 13, British Dramatists since World War II</i> [Claude Rawson]	
WEITZMANN, KURT, and others <i>The Icon</i> [Cyril Mango]	
WHO'S WHO 1983 [Geoffrey Wheatcroft]	
WINTLES, JUSTIN (Editor) <i>Markers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914: A biographical dictionary</i> [Barbara Oodwin]	
WOODCOCK, GEORGE <i>Letter to the Priest</i> [Mark Abley]	
Exhibition <i>Manet</i> (Grand Palais, Paris) [Heard Zerner]	
Opera <i>Giuseppe Puccini: Marion Lescaut</i> (Royal Opera House) [Mosco Carner]	
Television <i>Voltaire: The Death of Lorraine</i> (Channel 4) [Peter Kemp]	
Theatre <i>JEAN GIRAUDOUX: The Trojan War will not Take Place</i> (Lyttelton Theatre) [Harold Hobson]	
Author <i>Arthur</i>	
Poems by Tom Ditch, Michael Hofmann, Ian Fople, Carol Rumpens, and Charles Tomlinson	509, 504, 510, 506
Paperbacks in brief	

## FRENCH HISTORY

WILLIAM FORTESCUE  
Alphonse de Lamartine: A Political Biography  
286pp. Croom Helm. £16.95.  
07099 12544

'I have seen M. de Lamartine, and greatly like him. He is very good-looking and distinguished in his appearance and dresses so perfectly like a gentleman that one would never suspect him to be a poet.' Thus the Countess of Blessington; Lamartine himself might well have taken the compliment in the spirit in which it was intended, for he was indeed a gentleman, which was rather more than being a mere politician. Both his parents came from noble families and his father had been one of the royalists who defended the Tuilleries on August 10, 1792. Their only son was not to be entrusted to a Napoleonic lycée, but was educated by the Jesuits. When he left college there could be no question of his serving the usurper, but he duly joined a rather exclusive cavalry regiment as soon as Louis XVIII was back on the throne, and accompanied the king on his flight from Paris in 1815. He resigned his commission soon after the second Restoration and divided the next few years between womanizing, poetry and the unsuccessful pursuit of a sub-prefecture. When he was eventually given a minor diplomatic post in Italy in 1820, thanks to his careful cultivation of aristocratic and royalist circles in Paris, he spent most of his time on leave. He resigned after the 1830 revolution, more as a gesture of principle than from any attachment to Charles X.

When he entered politics, despite his fairly rapid evolution to the Left, he gave many of the legitimists who voted for him the impression that he was the French equivalent of a Tory radical. He wanted governments to pursue an active social policy but always insisted on the sanctity of the family and of private property. In 1840 he could perhaps have become a Minister, but he would have done nothing less than the Interior or the Foreign Office. Both in Parliament and out of it - after the coup d'état of 1851 - he divided his time between Paris and his country estate in the Saône-et-Loire. When his debts already ran to over a million francs he still kept nine horses and was buying new land. He accepted a public subscription on his behalf but refused.

convictions of his own, even if he was careful when and how to proclaim them, and they were not those of his milieu. He was rather unusual in his total rejection of Napoleon as the tyrant who destroyed liberty at home and the conqueror who made France hated throughout Europe. He was a fairly consistent advocate of a pacific foreign policy, even to the point of accepting the need to allow British warships to search suspected French slavers. It was his government that abolished slavery within France and it was fitting that he

Republic of Haiti should be represented at his funeral. Although an economic liberal and opposed to state intervention, he was also an advocate of free education and insisted that the poor could not be allowed to starve.

Lamartine's strictly political convictions were more flexible, but they were not adjusted to suit his own advancement. Although he was very good at promoting his own reputation, through influential friends and the

revolution of 1789 serves as a kind of pressure-gauge by which this radicalism can be measured. Always convinced that *l'homme est un être libre*, he was the annunciation of a new era, he at first accepted Louis XVIII's Charter at its legitimate sequel and blamed Charles X for provoking his own overthrow in 1830. In his misleadingly named *History of the Girondins* of 1847 (it was, in fact, rather more sympathetic to Robespierre), he seemed to embrace 1793 as an integral part of the revolution. The June Days

conservative republican in 1848. He was not always very good at judging which way the wind was blowing and in 1850 he believed the threat to property, from the social republicans, was greater than Louis Napoleon's threat to political liberty. All this did not make a consistent public stance but it was reasonable and honourable enough. Lamartine's mistake, from the 1840s onwards, was to believe that his own weight was enough to trim the balance of the boat.

Above all, and throughout his career, he was a man of words. He must have known some seductive ones, to have made all those conquests in his early years. There was his poetry, which William Fortescue has decided to leave out of his 'political' biography. The poetry raises problems that are not easily resolved. There is a sense in which any lyric poet who chooses to publish his most intimate self-examinations, is something of an exhibitionist, unless publication is his only means of supporting himself as a poet. This was not Lamartine's case. The poems themselves, irrespective of their undoubted merit, have a kind of sermonizing quality. They give the impression of being not so much Lamartine's immediate reactions to experience, as the general conclusions that he drew from it: emotions, not merely recollected in tranquillity but arranged for an audience. This is not to accuse him, as Fortescue frequently does, of hypocrisy. One need not accept Lamartine's own account, when he had just become Foreign Minister, that 'he had never attached any real importance to his poems, and that he had always been preoccupied with the great and serious matters of politics.' He was rather prone to saying what seemed appropriate to the time and to a particular audience. It does look, though, as if he hoped to use his reputation as a poet as a way of winning that elusive sub-prefecture and, later on, as the road to the secretaryship of a minor embassy, which perhaps says something about his sense of priorities.

Lamartine was far from being alone in his perception of the world as a place where words, spoke louder than actions. There is an element of myth about all politics, but it was especially true of the generation that lived under the shadow of the monstrous events of 1789-1815, as Chateaubriand, the greatest word-enchanter of them all, was well aware. The legitimists, with



A popular print of Lamartine and the lawyer and politician Alexandre Ledru-Rollin returning from the Hôtel de Ville on May 15, 1848.

revived his old fears of mob violence and by the time he wrote his *History of the Restoration* in 1851-53, he was back with the Charter and Louis XVIII. A few years later, in his book on the Constituent Assembly, the pendulum swung back as far as Mirabeau. What it all amounted to was a rather vague political liberalism that tried to reconcile popular sovereignty, individual liberty and the sanctity of property. When any one of these seemed in immediate danger, Lamartine shifted his balance in the opposite direction, which made him a radical in the 1830s and 1840s and a

His fluctuating reaction to the

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their "Chambre inouvable" and their "enfant du miracle", dreamed of the impossible restoration of a Golden Age that they had themselves invented. The clerical party was convinced that if only France dedicated itself to God's work, the Almighty would provide the means. Bonapartists, and most cloudily Louis Napoleon himself, moved in a world of mists, where peace, military glory, prosperity for all, the triumph of Catholicism and popular sovereignty enjoyed a shadowy coexistence. The republicans, intoxicated with the complex myths of the revolution, took it for granted that when Paris spoke France was bound to obey and a new republic would once again bring enlightenment to the nations - and liberation to Poland. Socialism, as it existed in France, assumed forms that Marx was to dismiss as utopian. Even the great Karl himself, in 1848, was perpetually snatching the horizon for the first sight of the conquering armies of a proletariat that had scarcely begun to exist.

Lamarine was not the only one to hypnotize himself with his own incantations. The Vienna frontiers were to be revised to France's advantage - but peacefully; no alliance was to be made with England - without renouncing objectives that the British Government would not accept; he gradually came to accept popular sovereignty and the inevitability of a republic - but it must not lead to collectivism or threaten property. During the economic crisis of 1846 he advocated the imposition of a uniform national price for cereals - but without interfering with the grain trade. The historian of the Convention should have known better than that. It was partly a matter of timing at mutually irreconcilable goals, but also, and less creditably, of telling different audiences what each wanted to hear.

The 1848 revolution brought triumph and disaster within a matter of months. He had succeeded so well in his public relations that when the Provisional Government was formed in February he was on everyone's list. Before elections could be held he struggled, honourably but not without guile, to exercise the demon of violence by his oratory alone. He leaked revolutionary sentiments to the press and then repudiated them in official despatches. He assured the British Ambassador, Lord Normanby, that he recognized only the Union Jack within Great Britain; but not before he had accepted an Irish flag from a group of *émigré* nationalists. For a time it worked. Lamarine made a useful contribution to delaying the inevitable and the April elections were a personal triumph, when he was returned in ten Departments, polling over a million

and a quarter votes and securing 99 per cent of the votes in his own Department. Reality was not long in breaking through, symbolized appropriately enough when a demonstrator during the *fourth* of May 15 silenced him with "Enough of your poetry." He insisted on including Ledru-Rollin on the Executive Commission, which alienated the conservatives, only to break with him after the June Days, which lost him any radical support. In the presidential election of December he ran a bad fifth, polling a mere 18,000 votes in the entire country. In the following May the *Saône-et-Loire* ejected him from the Assembly. He soon came back, when he won a by-election in the Loiret, but the *coup d'état* of 1851 merely extinguished a political career that was already in ruins.

During the Second Empire Lamarine turned back to the written word, in the hopeless search for a way of paying his debts. This time it was history: four more volumes on the Revolution, eight on the Restoration, two on the 1848 revolution (described by Fortescue as "a clear and deliberate distortion of events") but what politician can be objective about his own eclipse? A history of Turkey in eight volumes, a life of Alexander the Great in two more and a history of Russia, not to mention a play, a novel and various periodicals intended to provide the uneducated with improving reading. When his collected works were published in 1860-61 they ran to forty-one volumes. It was all to no purpose. He could never repeat the success of his *History of the Girondins*, the debts went on accumulating and his serial works were popular only in intention. Gradually he declined into an old age of terrifying bitterness and frustration, without the will to live or the ability to die. His release did not come until 1869.

Fortescue packs all this into less than 300 pages. His biography is of the "shilling life" which you all the facts variety, although prices have gone up since Auden's day. He seems to have said, "I'm sorry, but the French Revolution was a good thing, but the provincial ones too and he knows all about Lamarine's friends. This gives his book a somewhat staccato character: there is so much going on that he never has time to investigate anything in much depth. His intention was presumably to write the kind of book that undergraduates would actually read - the last biography of Lamarine in English was published as long ago as 1918 - and it would be unfair to criticize him for not attempting an analysis in depth that would have called for a much longer book.

All the same, one is rather puzzled

by his decision to tackle the subject at all, since he begins with what looks like a fairly pronounced dislike of Lamarine. An essay for the *Quai d'Orsay* was written with "his usual hypocrisy"; his attempt to become an improving landlord was made purely to promote his political career; his poetry was another means to the same end. Fortescue even suggests that "he may also have exploited his mother's death to cultivate a newspaper and gain favourable publicity". Gradually, this carping tone gives way to something like neutrality but it is not until the conclusion that Lamarine is entitled to any sympathy. We are then told of his "considerable abilities", his "dedication to principles" and his "high ideals" in private as well as public life. This is perhaps going rather far in the opposite direction if one contrasts his affairs with married women and his illegitimate offspring with his repeated assertions of the sanctity of the family. One never gets a consistent picture of what it must have felt like to be this inconsistent man, which is perhaps fair enough.

Fortescue begins his conclusion by quoting Corneille's remark that Lamarine was "Poète avant tout", which may be true but scarcely supports his biographer's decision to leave out the poetry and stick to the politics. In the end we are left without any deep insight into who Lamarine was but we get a clear and authoritative account of what he did.

"Voilà un livre haut placé... dans l'apathie publique": a cartoon to mark the publication of *Histoire des Girondins* in 1847. Lamarine noted that "Des femmes les plus élégantes ont passé la nuit pour attendre leur exemplaire."

Safe behind walls

Eugen Weber

Bernard Chevallier

Les bonheurs viles de France du XVIIIe au XIXe siècle. 345pp. Paris: Aubier Montaigne. 130fr. 2,700f 0291 3

Bernard Chevallier has written a highly readable account of French towns during a very active period - the last such time that many of them were to know for a long while: the three hundred odd years between the end of the "medieval" thirteenth century and the Edict of Nantes.

The *bonheur viles* is a town, but not just any town. It is "good" because it fulfils its function which is first to provide the security of a wall and moat, then to serve as administrative and judicial centre of a greater or lesser region, finally to function as a community with institutions of its own. Thus, fourteenth-century Compiègne "est une ville fermée en laquelle demeure... en grant et suffisant nombre d'habitables, clercs et chanoines pour demurer, soutenir et garder les lois, causes et procès... ce qui n'est pas ainsi dit Pierrefonds, car ce n'est qu'une ville champêtre, sans fermeture... despourve de conseil".

For Chevallier, the fundamental difference between ordinary country towns and *bonheurs viles* does not lie in their "economic" and "demographic" growth stem from the fact that, in a *bonheur viles*, legal and other business thrive in profitable symbiosis because men of law and arms are found. And we shall see that the proliferation of these professionals; who played a material part in the prosperity of towns and townsmen, turned out as crucial in their decline.

By the sixteenth century, of the twelve hundred or so walled towns in France, about five hundred were mainly royal towns. Leaving aside the "great" judicial centres (Paris, Toulouse, Rouen, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Dijon, Aix-en-Provence and Rennes), some three hundred of these county court towns turned into true judicial centres, many of them financial centres too: residences of officers or "farmers" collecting aids and taxes. Above all, though, by that time the men of law and office had multiplied and they had created



whom their merchant cousins looked like poor relations; and the social break between the officer and the merchant class dissolved the erstwhile unanimity of the bourgeoisie.

Nobles had left the towns as the thirteenth century ended, and this relinquished urban management to the "honourable men" of the bourgeoisie, grown wealthy by trade and the farming of taxes, but advantaged too by royal policies which, during much of the time the book covers, shifted direct taxes from towns to countryside, and used the towns as *ad hoc* banks: a source of loans to be guaranteed by the proceeds from royal taxes (the origin of *rentes*). Some of the advantages of the rich trickled down to their more modest fellows. Violence was endemic and everyone was armed; rich and poor lived very close, with the latter often buying their grain and wine from the former's store; and there was friction between more or less honourable estates (the butcher's bloody trade was infamous, which explains their frequent presence in the van of social disturbances); so there was plenty of opportunity for explosions, especially in hard times. But vertical integration minimized friction, as did public assistance to the "good" poor. Nor did the superior advantages of a few seem to affect the growth of a strong collective identity and local patriotism, strengthened by persistent endogamy, maintained by the breach between urban notables and exclusively rural nobility, reaffirmed by the growing assertion of a culture of urbanity (a word introduced at that time) as the antithesis of rusticity.

Chevallier discusses urbanity (hardly to be recognized as such today) and urbanism (*dito*) and neatly bundles the economic and institutional ups and downs of three centuries. He shows that the notorious orientation of "honourable men" towards administrative positions, public finance, and legal offices (with a concomitant detachment in due course from municipal affairs), was not due principally to their quest for noble status, but to very utilitarian estimates of the higher revenues to be derived from such functions: it remains that the evolution of *bourgeois* into *gentilhomme* meant less capital to be invested in the more productive pursuits that had first made the bourgeoisie possible; let alone in that prize of aristocratic revolution that John Nor saw taking shape around 1540; but which never took off. And that the growing interest in offices, which the Crown played and preyed on after

C.O. BRINK  
Horace on Poetry: Epistles Book II, The Letters to Augustus and Florus. 644pp. Cambridge University Press. 147.50. 0 521 20069 5

There is a great deal of Greek and Roman poetry about poetry. For the most part metaphor and symbol predominate in it. Heliconian springs, Apollo, the Muses and other inspirational gods, disputes with envious literary antagonists, arts and crafts, bees and trees, contrasting types of life, ideals of purity, originality, subtlety and variety - these and many other similar topics are the staples of the rich programmatic literature of antiquity, which can range from the totally explicit, eg. the prologue to Callimachus' *Aetia*, to the subtly implicit, eg. Horace's own first Ode (1.1). The poets of the late Roman world and early Empire, like their Hellenistic predecessors, applied themselves to this subject area with great enthusiasm.

What sets Horace apart from his fellow-Augustans and indeed from all other ancient poets is that he alone among surviving writers deals with the writing of poetry in a critical rather than metaphorical terms, treating such subjects as the choice and arrangement of material for poetry, the appropriate vocabulary for it, poetic unity and excellence, the different poetic forms and their relations, Greek and Roman literature, style and content. Moreover, he does so at considerable length in three works in epistolary form, the *Arte Poetica*, addressed to the "Phoebus", and the two shorter treatises of *Epistles* II, the *Epistula ad Augustum* and the *Epistula ad Florum*.

The works themselves are as fascinating to read as they are elusive to interpret. Here Horace is typically Maratist: sophisticated, complex, ironic and self-mocking, and far too skilled a poet to have produced a series of verified lectures on creative writing. Rather, the notion of satisfying the curiosity of his contemporaries about the life of a Roman poet and his attitudes to his work is exploited as a starting-point for three meditations on the linked themes of literature, criticism, philosophy and life. Of course, readers and scholars have not failed to be intrigued by the possibility that this most central of Augustan writers is really telling us in these works something about his place in the Augustan world, his relations with the *princeps* and his attitudes to

his work and his age. But the nineteenth and early twentieth century did not provide the literary epistles of Horace with the major edition and commentary which their importance would certainly have justified. It was then perhaps inevitable that by the middle of the twentieth century scholarly discussion of them had become bogged down in a series of unfruitfully opposed views, which either under- or over-emphasized the element of literary theory. In consequence the works themselves became unjustly undervalued.

The role played by the absence of a satisfactory commentary in this process is characteristic, and it reminds us of the vital place of major commentaries within the history of classical scholarship. More than any other type of scholarly work, it is the commentary which has formed the corner-stone of the discipline. Through the centuries ever since antiquity, schoolchildren and scholars have studied the major classical texts with, at their side, a line-for-line, sometimes word-for-word, commentary, which offered them relevant (and sometimes irrelevant) information of all types - lexicographical, grammatical, geographical, textual, etc. The limitations of the commentary form on scholars seeking a wider understanding of the work as a whole have recently become more and more evident - knowing seventeen unconnected facts about each line of a poem does not necessarily lead to any grasp of its structure, sense, or place in the literary universe. But the constructive response to these limitations is not to abandon the commentary - and with it the precision and breadth of learning which is a necessary basis for coming to terms with the works of cultures as alien from ours as those of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The commentary form is capable of being redefined, extended and made infinitely more flexible; and it is precisely this which C. O. Brink has achieved in masterly fashion.

The first volume of Professor Brink's three-volume commentary on the literary epistles of Horace appeared in 1963, the second in 1971, and this, the third volume, in late 1982. Volume One (the *Prolegomena*) was a major monograph, mainly concerned with the *Arte Poetica*. It made clear both what it achieved and what it was not. Of course, readers and scholars have not failed to be intrigued by the possibility that this most central of Augustan writers is really telling us in these works something about his place in the Augustan world, his relations with the *princeps* and his attitudes to

## The Augustan essence

Francis Cairns

scale treatments of major areas, a new text, line-by-line and word-by-word comment accompanied by extensive discussion of each section of the poems, appendices, extended essays, all these are coherently combined in a new means of applying scholarship and critical intelligence to classical poetry. Not only is the form unique, but the function of the different ways of handling the material is also something new: nothing is extraneous, everything is dealt with in the most appropriate mode, and all parts interact with all others.

The appendices which follow the detailed commentary are more numerous in Volume Three (twenty-one) than in Volume Two (three). A number of them are concerned with the field of interest wider than the literary epistles of Horace, and their content should be known to scholars working in all areas of ancient studies. I note as of particular personal value Two, which deals with the Latin equivalents of the Greek *krinikos* and *grammatikos*, Five, on *exigere*, and Nineteen, on the *Genius*. After the appendices comes a long discursive essay (or set of essays) entitled "The Letters to Augustus and Florus as Augustan Poetry". This deals with a number of important problems with ramifications for all ancient poetry. When discussing poetic patterns Brink is of course following on in part from his earlier discussion in Volume Two. But there is much that is new and, as in Volume Two, his general remarks on this topic lead into specific analyses - here of the conceptual and structural make-up of the *Epistula ad Augustum* and *Epistula ad Florum*. Brink's approach to these questions are masterly; the sheer complexity of the problems becomes, in his hands, an instrument of instruction. The same can be said of his treatment of Augustanism in Augustan poetry and his periodization of Augustus's reign, and the implications which emerge from it for the understanding of Augustan poetry. Most scholars working in this field have their own private visions of Horace, of Augustus and of the key dates in Augustus's reign; Brink's perceptions

background to Horace's stricture, quoting Cicero and Livy for this purpose. He ends by pointing out that there is little evidence that what Horace is complaining about does in fact contrast with an earlier and simpler method of staging Greek tragedies. To this effect, ancient and modern authorities are cited. All this, in all its detail, occupies less than one page of Brink's work. The note is, in effect, a learned paper compressed into that space without any loss of effectiveness.

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A randomly chosen item of commentary will exemplify its richness and clarity. *Epistula ad Augustum* 187-88 complains of over-emphasis on the visual aspects of drama. First of all an assertion of the ancient commentator Porphyrio that "H's" is based on the Academic devaluation of sense impression through sight" is rebutted by Brink with the aid both of internal cross-references with *Horace on Poetry* and of external references to other modern secondary literature. In place of this assertion Brink then offers the opinion that "the literary-critical view... predominates". For this we are referred to Aristotle's *Poetics*, but the need for due caution in this area is emphasized. Brink then turns to contemporary or near-contemporary parallel material which fills in the

of these matters will certainly be an essential corrective to many assumptions. Indeed, it would be a rash scholar who now ventured into print on these matters without having satisfied himself that he had taken proper account of this section of Brink's work.

*Horace on Poetry* has the unusual quality of being at once immensely original and highly authoritative. This is of course partly because Brink carries out so scrupulously his programme of informing the reader on as many levels as possible. But it is also because he has brought to the work a combination of scholarship, experience and perceptiveness which can only arouse admiration. There will of course be the disagreement with occasional details which no major commentary can fail to provoke. But in their scope, detail and sheer intellectual grandeur, the three volumes of *Horace on Poetry* are a milestone in the history of classical scholarship, and they must surely be welcomed with acclaim by every classicist. Despite Brink's modesty in his preface, *Horace on Poetry* does indeed rival the great commentaries he names there, which include Wilmowitz's *Horace* and Fraenkel's *Agamemnon*. It cannot be doubted that a century from now it too will be named and used in their company.

Cambridge University Press, which has of late received some criticism in the pages of the *TLS* for production quality, deserves nothing but commendation for *Horace on Poetry*. In this case, the quality of the work has been matched by the quality of production. It is clear that no reasonable expense has been spared on typesetting, printing, binding, above all - and a rare phenomenon at present - the author has been given the space he needed to complete the work properly. One hopes that purchasers will respond by realizing that in terms both of current production costs and of the enormous importance of the content, *Horace on Poetry* (including Volume Three) is very reasonably priced indeed.

"Bravo!"  
GRAHAM GREENE

## Stephen Vizinczey An Innocent Millionaire

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NINA BAWDEN, *Daily Telegraph*

"A very funny and serious book... the author's English is timeless, elaborate, musical... the narrative is packed with aphorisms... tempo, twists, humour and horror speed up... a crescendo of treachery, delay and despoliation that makes 'Black House' look like a teaparty... Someone urges Mark to read Balzac... But Mark with his monomaniacal quest; his passion for money, his lone stand against the world, is already a character in a novel by Balzac, as are his enemies, powered by greed and anarchic individualism."

VICTORIA GLENDINNING, *The Sunday Times*

Hamish Hamilton 0 33

## Eternal for ever

Paolo Filo della Torre

PAUL HOFMAN  
Rome: The Sweet Tempestuous Life. 245pp. Collins Harvill. £7.95. 0 00 26275 2

Paul Hofman, correspondent of the *New York Times* since 1945, knows Rome, it would seem, better than the Romans, and his knowledge of Roman secrets is reflected in this entertaining book, in which we can read about subjects as diverse as the Church, Roman society, political scandals, kidnapping, and spaghetti. Hofman appears to be as much at home in the dim ambience of Elsa's *casa chiusa* in which he discovered "all there is to know about" whores, as he is in the *Crocio dello Carcio* - a well-known club for the aristocracy. Most of the stories that he tells are contemporary Roman legends. The "Mr Fixit" Callaghan brothers are as much part of the Rome today as they would have been during the last days of the Empire. Gibbon would have recognized the type. Immediately, though, Hofman is not Glibbo; he has provided a diverting socio-economic backdrop to the glories and disasters that are Rome.

finders of everything, who usually operate in the Porta Portese flea-market on the right bank of the Tiber: a *travaro* can be had anything required at an extremely competitive price. Hofman is unclear on the role of the Italian Communist Party as a *travaro* but one is able to understand from his description the way in which the Communists in Rome are very different from Communists elsewhere. His guide to the *Contemporary Europe* - the alliance between the Communists and the Christian Democrats - is admirable and informative.

In *Rome: the Sweet Tempestuous Life* Hofman illuminates the chaotic traffic and the general deterioration of the quality of life at almost every level. People and places depicted here are as eternal as the city itself: the only problem being that they are less glamorous, not only in comparison with the splendour that was Ancient Rome, but also with the more up-to-date myth of Federico Fellini's *dolce vita*. For if anything has survived Rome's evanescent renaissance of the late 1950s and 1960s, Hofman tells us, it can certainly no longer be found in the Via Veneto or in the Piazza Fontana del Travi. Mass tourism and hordes of people converging on them from the poorer districts have virtually killed the fascination of the former centres of the *dolce vita*: the transformation of a Rizzoli bookshop into a bank not only impoverishes the

Via Veneto but is a loss to the whole city.

Roman existence today is as easy and irresponsible as it has been since its first decline and fall. The philosophy of *arrangiarsi* will, Hofman believes, never disappear. Apart from pleasure, strange rites and subterranean scandals, tragic events, such as assassinations and kidnappings, occur regularly. However, Hofman feels that Rome is a city that has lost its soul.

His portraits add up to an overall mosaic. Rome is undoubtedly very special. Unlikely to become merely a museum, it should be able to survive industrial civilization which, as Hofman points out, does at least as much harm to the visible heritage of the city as did the barbarian invasion of the sixth century, and all the other historic calamities that it has lived through.

*Archaeological Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War*: the first volume of *Translated Documents of Greece and Rome*, edited and translated by Charles W. Fornara. (241pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50. 0 521 25019 6). has recently been published in a revised second edition. The material, much of it translated for the first time, is compiled from ancient encyclopaedias, scholia and inscriptions,

## On the Margins

Hospitality and uoases, weekend guests to this Chekhovian rectory painted a frivolous bluish pink. It is comfortable and falcon, as though run by children, but with an adult's gold and for basics, food, warmth, light... At other times, what conversations, what demeanour I stare at myself in the gray, oxidized mirror over the fireplace, goddess, inept, countrified. The distance disappears between rooms and volcas. Stuffy and centripetal, I tag after my hosts, talking, offering 'help', sitting on tables

We drove twenty miles to buy roses, to a stately home behind a moat and a pair of netted alliums. The shaggy, youthful master of the house was already on his second family. His little boy must have guessed. He had the exemplary energy of the late child, working on his parents' stamina. He was a professional, who played a material part in the prosperity of towns and townsmen, turned out as crucial in their decline.

Back here, I feel again spiritual, unhappy, the wrong age. Not to be considered to, still less fit for equality. I quarrel with you over your work 'accomplished', and then sink off upstairs to make it up. We hear the hoarse, sea-saw crier of the donkeys grazing in the churchyard, mother and daughter, and the first mosquitoes going up and down, practising their verticals like a video game. Next door, his green clothes hung on pegs, Eric, the rustic burr, in taking a bath, whistling and crooning happily. In his timelapse, folkloric voice, I pat your nakedness in evil whispers, I manage to convince you.

Michael Hofmann



## Coming to blows

Helge Rubinstein

MARGARET BORKOWSKI,  
MERVYN MURCH and VAL  
WALKER

Marital Violence: The Community  
Response  
230pp. Tavistock. £10.95 (paperback,  
£4.95).  
0 442 78120 7

Violence inside marriage is a subject most of us prefer to avoid. This book is based on research commissioned by the DHSS into "the community response" to marital violence, and the authors set out to discover how solicitors, GPs, social workers and health visitors react to the cases of marital violence that come to their attention. The answer is: with ambivalence, like the rest of society.

The first problem is one of definition, and here already one stumbles into the heart of the difficulty. Since marriage is essentially a private matter, how can any outsider define what constitutes violence? Any aggressive, hostile behaviour which falls outside the normal rough and tumble of marriage, said one doctor—but one man's rough and tumble may be another's playfulness and a third man's violent assault. A solicitor thought that persistent intellectual bullying by the more intelligent partner counts as violence, while a social worker saw it as "any violent act leading to injury as opposed to mere threat".

It was not the researchers' aim to ascertain the extent of marital violence in Britain, but they estimate that as many as one in five, or even one in three marriages may have violent episodes. Nor was it their task to establish the causes of violence in marriage, but from the explanations

given by the practitioners questions, it seems that alcohol, poverty and psycho-sexual problems were the cause mentioned most frequently—not much change there from the findings of Victorian social reformers. Cultural expectations have a lot to do with our attitudes to violence in the family. While such violence is by no means confined to one class, it seems that working-class women (or men, for that matter, for they too can be the victims of assault) are more prepared to acknowledge that it exists; or, to put it differently, the socially deprived are more used to asking for help from the statutory agencies, and we therefore have more evidence of violence among the poorer sections of the population. As long as we think of violence as a form of deviance, we perpetuate a myth of what is normality in marriage, but, as the authors point out, there has been no research into what the norms of marital behaviour actually are. Should there be, could there be?

The crux of the difficulty lies in the very nature of marriage itself, its fundamental purpose being to provide the partners with the experiences of intimacy which is so central to this well-being of the individual; and intimacy needs the protection of privacy in order to thrive. "The irony is that privacy contributes to, and reinforces, the intimacy and sense of solidarity in family life that society values, while it also nurtures and protects the very conditions in which conflict and violence develop." As soon as one partner asks for outside help or protection, that boundary of privacy has been transgressed, and the fear is that the intimacy may be lost. Violence itself can be seen as the expression of closeness, and this can be one of the reasons why wives return to a violent spouse—at least he cares enough to bash her around. Because this is often hard for an outsider to understand, social workers and lawyers are frequently irritated and frustrated by

what seems irrational, even self-destructive behaviour in their clients, and this in turn adds to their reluctance to involve themselves in such cases. A further reason for the reluctance lies in the tension between the wish to respect the privacy of marriage and the desire to protect the potential victim, all of which implies some degree of social or legal control or sanctions. Social workers, who see themselves primarily as supportive, suffer most from this contradiction in their roles.

No wonder it is difficult to formulate a clear social policy on how to deal with violence in marriage. Even when a practical course of action emerges, as happened in the 1970s with the women's refuge movement, the issues rapidly became clouded. The Women's Aid organization became entangled with the feminist movement, which in turn affected the attitude of government towards giving financial support. Without such support many hostels have become so run down that homes, even with a violent husband, often seem preferable. The wheel has come full circle and the patriarchal society seems to have won again in what has been made to appear a power struggle between man and woman.

This value of *Marital Violence* lies in the way the authors' research has identified and unravelled the many issues at stake. However, having posed the question—how can violence in marriage be stopped without necessarily breaking up the marriage?—and having made a plea that the complexities should not be allowed to be an excuse for inaction, the authors themselves seem to become paralysed by the difficulties, and can only recommend greater interdisciplinary training and communication among the practitioners concerned. It is a long way from the prompt and untrammelled response that the victim of violence needs at the critical moment.



"Striding Nude, blue dress II", 1979-81, an oil painting by Egon Ullow, who has been in the exhibition of his paintings and drawings at Brown and Darby, 19 Cork Street, London W1, from May 18 to June 23.

## The surrogate role

Mary Kathleen Benet

ALICE HEIM

Thicker than Water?: Adoption: its  
loyalties, pitfalls and joys  
211pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95  
(paperback, £5.50).  
0 436 19155 5

Does adoption work, or is blood thicker than water? Many adoptive families are just as happy as "biological" families. Adopted children can have problems; on the other hand sometimes they feel that they were specially chosen. And everyone knows that problems can arise even in biological families. These, in all their subtle banality, are Alice Heim's conclusions. She sent out an "open-ended" letter asking adoptive parents and adoptees about the advantages and disadvantages of adoption. On the basis of about a hundred replies, she believes that she and her contributors have "got to the

guts of the matter" because the writers themselves chose whether to reply and what aspects of adoption to discuss.

This makes for a cosy book, but one which leaves out all the main problems of modern adoption. Class does matter, Dr Heim writes, because external signs of class membership—such as accent, and environment—are determined. The adoptee who was protesting about an adoptive who moved her down the social scale, who realized on a school trip that she was a race in which some people talk halfway round this was the point. Race fares little better. Several people observe that their black adopted children are likely to have more difficulty later because of being black than because of being adopted, and one offers this whimsical up on raising such children: use race date epithets as pet names in the home. Then, when the child goes to school and is called "y-n-o-g", it will reply sweetly, "Why, did you know my nickname?"

Holm, who has brought up two adopted children herself, from a new lms giving adoptees access to information about their origins. She agrees with the adoptive parents who say "Let sleeping dogs lie". But the dog is no longer asleep. Single-parent adoption is stigmatized as "fashionable" and dangerous because it may lead to what Heim in the horror of horrors: "only-ness". She says flatly, "At least two infants should be adopted." She argues that adoptees seem to feel only new special keenly; and to long for their own children so that finally they will have blood relations. Why is this, and she does it say about adoption?

Hasily leaving these obvious questions, Heim offers an extraordinary section on child-raising in general. Why was this sub-Spock compendium of potty training "as easy as nappies; in potty training 'as easy as nappies' way produces best results" games such as Heim's and Spock are popular in the latency period; travel abroad is beneficial for young people.

What will parents, adoptive or not, learn from this? What will young makers learn from the rest of the book? Heim has no idea, as she freely informs us, whether her sample is a representative. But she feels there are some things we should know. Single-parent adoption should not be given the same status as two-parent adoption. Children, and child-parenting, are natural parents can still unforgotten. Perhaps at the Old Bailey, where Dr Heim serves as an expert witness, she has come across people who still do not know these things.

## Villanelle: a Case of Deprivation

A shelf of books, a little meat  
— How rich we felt, how deeply fed—  
But these are not what children eat.  
The regular rose from his seat.  
Confetti danced, and thus were wed  
A shelf of books, a little meat.

We sang, for songs are cheap and sweet:  
This state dropped by with crumbs of bread,  
But these are not what children eat.

They came, demanding trick or treat;  
We shut out eyes, and served instead  
A shelf of books, a little meat.

Then on our hearts the whole world beat,  
And of our hopes the whole world said  
But these are not what children eat.

Two shadows shiver on our street.  
They have a roof, a fire, a bed,  
A shelf of books, a little meat.  
But these are not what children eat.

Carol Rumens

## Missiles, men and money

John Gooch

GWYN HARRIS-JENKINS  
(Editor)

Armed Forces and the Welfare  
State: Challenges in the 1980s—  
Britain, the Netherlands, Germany,  
Sweden and the United States  
233pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0 353 33542 2

At a time when all the Western economies are in difficulties and when in the words of one of the contributors to this book, "the beginning of the end of the welfare state is perhaps at hand", it makes good sense to try to assess the problems which will face defence planners and politicians in the coming decade. The five essays gathered together here, along with two contributions from the editor, seek to do this by addressing two issues simultaneously: the problem of high and rising defence costs colliding with increased financial restrictions, and the competition between the needs of defence and the hitherto accepted requirements of the welfare state. The latter is as yet more an academic than a practical problem; politicians have not so far been reduced to offering the public Trident missiles in exchange for hospitals. But something not unlike that might conceivably make its way out to the political agenda in some of the countries under review here. If it does there is one brutally simple way out of the impasse which none of the essays squarely face, but more of that later.

The countries selected for detailed study—Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and the United States—are not ideal for the purposes of making comparisons and generalizations: the United States does not really belong here, but France and Italy do. Nor do the contributors tackle their subjects in a uniform manner. Perhaps because of

the diversity of treatments, no one makes the fundamental point that welfare societies, as well as being instruments for the provision and distribution of services such as health, education and the like, also embody fundamental ideas about social relationships. As these ideas tend towards the egalitarian and the participatory, populations born and brought up under their influence might be expected to find themselves in conflict with some of the more traditional structures of the armed forces. The essays of Fritz Olivier and Gerd Teitler, in a fascinating chapter on the "Dutch Experiment", describe the variety of measures being adopted in Holland to overcome such reactions and to make the armed services into something more like civilian work-forces in attitude and structure. Whether similar policies are necessary and appropriate in other societies is something the book does not really consider.

Despite their differences, which are considerable, all five countries face problems which are basically the same: high and escalating defence costs, and the difficulty of recruiting and then retaining adequate personnel. In terms of sheer numbers, Britain, Germany and the United States are confronted with cohorts of eighteen-year-olds which will shrink in size until the mid-1990s, although the Dutch demographic pattern is more consistent. One, whether a period of relatively high unemployment will of itself solve the recruitment problem is hard to say, as examples conflict: Keith Hartley, in the course of a stimulating analysis of Britain's defence needs from an economist's viewpoint, remarks on the positive correlation between unemployment and recruitment from 1970 to 1976, whereas Olivier and Teitler state that even in periods of high unemployment and economic slump the Dutch armed forces have been unable to recruit adequate numbers. The drawbacks of relying on

unemployment—with the admixture of a racial factor—are graphically illustrated in Alan Ned Shroky's chapter on the United States, a succinct and wide-ranging study of the American manpower problem and of possible solutions to it.

The problems of competing with civil society to recruit and retain specialists in a technological age are readily apparent, and seem to be universal. Equally, most of the armed forces under analysis here find it hard to secure and retain a large enough body of good non-commissioned officers. Here one feels the absence of a French dimension: recent research has shown that no's in the French navy and air force regard joining the armed forces as an upward social move, the first rung on the professional ladder. The French case may well be unique, but given the expectations about income and lifestyle that thirty years of the welfare state have helped to generate, there may be some advantages to be gained from closer analysis of this phenomenon. Diminished social status seems to have given rise to a general difficulty in recruiting to officer corps, and none of the five countries examined here have found the answer to this problem. In terms of the general problem of making up the

overall numbers, solutions under consideration range from extending conscript service and drafting women to, in the German case, conscripting *gastarbeiter*. In the latter case, the reader is left to speculate on the consequences of such an act.

One of the fundamental facts of defence policy, and something which inevitably raises the question of substitution, is the huge expense of manpower. BAOR, at £1,079,000,000 in 1979-80, cost more than double any other single main item of British defence expenditure, and in Germany operations expenditure (pay rises, enlistment bonuses, improved rank structure) took 49.6 per cent of the budget in 1980. Since these costs are likely to increase rather than diminish, alongside rising technological costs, the issue arises of whether western European populations will be prepared to accept cuts in welfare services alongside higher defence spending, which seems inescapable. The editor himself raises this question in his introduction but does not answer it. As the provision of certain services, or levels of service, shifts from the public to the private sector, people will probably become accustomed to paying a higher price for what the welfare state could provide more cheaply. One obvious

consequence of this will be to reconfirm the importance—even the desirability—of extended deterrence. Nuclear weapons, aside from their political, strategic or political drawbacks, have the advantage of being relatively cheap, which is why they were chosen in the mid-1950s in preference to large conventional forces. Conventions of defence, as *The Economist* demonstrated last July, expensive. Welfare-state man might conceivably be prepared to do a uniform and risk his own death if he believed that by doing so he would significantly diminish the chances of his family, his home and his society being blown to pieces; whether, in a post-welfare age, he would be prepared to pay more for the privilege is a moot point.

One brutally simple answer to the central problem raised by this volume is therefore: cut welfare services and stick to nuclear weapons on a "first-use" basis. There are other answers embedded in this thought-provoking collection, of which perhaps the best is inherent in Keith Hartley's suggestion that the British public be given the opportunity to express an opinion on whether this country should cease to manufacture certain types of weapon and become a competitive buyer instead.

## Non-Fiction

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David Butler  
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0 002 217154 6 £7.95 (hardback)  
0 002 217071 X £4.95 (trade paperback)  
160pp. publication May 23

A collection of original essays by women writers, *Over Our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb*, edited by Dorothy Thompson, has recently been published by Virago in paperback (233pp, £2.95; 0 80068 348 5). The contributors include Angela Carter on "Anger in a Black Landscape", Kate Soper on "Contemplating a Nuclear Future", Lisa Foley on "Atomic Warfare: The Search for a Nuclear Alternative" and Mag-

## THE CONSPIRACY AND MURDER OF MAO'S HEIR

Yao Ming-le

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# Aaron and other anglophones

Claude Rawson

## MICHAEL STAPLETON

The Cambridge Guide to English Literature

992pp. Cambridge University Press and Newnes Books. £15.  
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The Cambridge Guide to English Literature

begins with Anon and ends with Yvonne and Gwyneth.

Zuleika Dobson doesn't get in, which she did (by a whisker) in the earlier Oxford Companion to English Literature.

which also (and more to the point) has entries for Zola, and Zeno, and Zolus, and Zola, and Zoroaster, including Zarathustra, Thus Spoke.

The difference epitomizes the two reference books, which are so similar in size, format and name as to suggest that comparisons are being courted.

It's not just that the older Companion had the stamina to see the alphabet through, adding some valuable

Appendices (on Censorship, Copyright and the Copyright Act, and on the new Guide out of

wind, though of wind it both has plenty and is always running out. The other point is that books and personages beginning with Z tend to be neither

English nor anglophone, hence no Z. When Sir Paul Harvey compiled the Oxford volume in 1932, he decided to include foreign entries in so far as they

impinged on English literature "as matter of allusion". The Cambridge Guide by contrast tends to exclude

what is not "English" in linguistic origin. Anon, the first entry, is "the Moor of Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus" and you would not guess that

there was a rather important figure of that name in the Old Testament. Similarly, Genesis is "A poem of nearly

3000 lines in Old English". Erasmus, though not congenitally anglophone, is included, presumably because even

Michael Stapleton accepts that he was a vital presence in English intellectual

life, but he gets about as much space as Perdur, Son of Evrard, who is

phone either, come to think of it, but UK neither OK? and half as much as Edith Sitwell.

The fact that this volume has global pretensions won't make this seem any

less provincial: it merely turns Little England into a sort of Little English-Speaking Union. The Guide sets out, as the Oxford Companion didn't, to cover the whole breadth of the anglophone world: British, American, Irish, South African, White Commonwealth, West Indian, African and Indian authors, but Nelson Algren and not Malcolm Cowley or Wallace Stevens, and one Naipaul but not the other and no Narayan. The net is cast wider in time as well as space. Where Hervey over-cautiously excluded contemporary authors (a few got in, when he felt their reputations could "hardly be ephemeral", and subsequent revisions, especially in Dorothy Eagle's admirable Fourth Edition, have added to the number), Stapleton's Guide is there with Athol Fugard and Thom Gunn and Geoffrey Hill and Tom Stoppard, and his William Golding and V. S. Naipaul entries include works as recent as *Rites of Passage* (1980) and *Among the Believers* (1981). In 1981, none of these authors had yet made the Companion. What ever new shape the Oxford volume will assume in its promised fifth Edition by Margaret Drabble, the two reference books are not for the moment direct competitors in coverage, but complementary and overlapping. To own both would not be twice as good as owning one, but one and a half times as good, more or less.

Rather less than more, if you judge by quality and not just width. The gain in coverage is offset by crippling weaknesses in tone, conception, and execution. Stapleton has admirable motives. He is for a start irrepressibly friendly. He is one of those critics who sometimes refer to Jane Austen as Jane, and I suspect this is not because he finds Austen too stiff and Miss Austen too good, but because he would like everybody to call him Michael, including reviewers. He wants to provide a good read as well as a reference book, which means that facts must be supplemented by "enthusiasm", and Michael's capacity for enthusiasm is almost unbounded, extending to works which, on the evidence of his comments and innumerable plot-summaries, he has scant recollection of. The way to display enthusiasm is apparently to put lots of personal opinions in your entries. "A guide who never makes a comment makes a dull companion," I bet he really meant dull Companion, which so uncompanionably preempted the name. But is he also saying that a companion ceases to be dull when he starts making comments, even when the comments are themselves dull? When an ex cathedra knowings bombast spaciouly in an unspecified void ("Had Shelley lived longer than thirty years his poetry might have reached an extraordinary level of quality. But not necessarily...") or when there is nothing to say, but a felt need to say it (for example, Michael's only opinion about Hemingway's *Islands in the Stream* is that it "does not affect the author's

reputation one way or the other"); or when the parade of fine distinctions turns into merely vacuous assertions of "difference" ("Pickwick is not far from Roderick Random, though of course the Victorian tone is much more recognizable, as a character than any of Richardson's; but it must be said also that Richardson's concerns were different from Fielding's"); or when the comments persistently miss the point, or the tone, or the wavelength, or all three together (in *Gulliver's Travels*, "Swift saw clearly that reason is man's priceless gift and that the ultimate appeal must always lie there": Hervey was the "enemy of Pope, who is rude" about him in his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and *The Dunciad*; "Desdemona is just the kind of warm and uncomplicated girl who would love the honest and great-hearted Moor"); or when they are so eccentric that one wonders whether the author can possibly have read the book he is talking about (the *Voyage to Lisbon*, Fielding's saddest and most dejected book, is described as a work of "mellow charm... a delightful travel-diary")?

On this evidence, one sees the point of the Oxford Companion's policy to give a low profile to "literary appreciation" and to stick to "conventional" rather than personal views. Such conservatism is better suited anyway to a volume mainly designed as a factual dictionary, and the facts which you will seek in it come over more clearly and effectively where the compiler practices a decent self-effacement instead of flooding the entry with his bumptious wordiness. The Cambridge Guide is worth having as a dictionary or it is not worth having. I can't imagine any reader other than Nicolas Bérkier, who wrote the Foreword, ever "reading" it as a book, not only because it isn't a book, but in that sense (though Michael thinks it is, and one which it took him "four long years... to write at that), but because it would be a very bad one if it were.

Regrettably, it is also not very good as what it is. For one thing the facts themselves are often wrong in substance or in emphasis. Take a short early entry on the *Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*. This work by Swift was not published in 1708 but in 1711, as was *The Sentiments of a Church of England Man* (which is not a "satirical pamphlet" and which may have been written in 1704, when Stapleton seems to think it was published, though Swift said it was written in 1708). *A Project for the Advancement of Religion* appeared in 1709, not 1708. The same short entry also refers to "what Swift called Occasional Conformity" as though the term were some sort of private usage. Other Swift entries (to take a single author, typical enough of the way many others are dealt with) show a similar pattern. The *Variorum on the Death* were not published in 1731 but in 1739. Davis's edition of the prose works has not "so far reached 14 volumes" but is complete (volume 14, if Stapleton had cared to look, consists mainly of the index; two volumes of *Journal of John Davis* are still in the press, but this doesn't affect the issue, though it occurred in time to be known to Stapleton and apparently not to him). These are only some of the errors of fact or emphasis on a single author. The list of statements which are misleading without being technically inaccurate might double the number.

Stapleton sometimes offers bibliographical advice to his readers. This is not a consistent matter of judgement, but the information appended, but of the information woven into the text as part of the compiler's friendly chat with the reader. Some authors or works get them, others not. Sometimes we are told the scholarly editions and sometimes almost anything, except these. To list all the errors and omissions in this book would take too long, and to select a few would be unfair to the rest. The only thing to be said is that readers should be wary of advice, unless he has double-checked

elsewhere (I say double-checked in case the reader stumbles on the original source of Stapleton's error because he seems to have got some of his mistakes from other reference books and hardly ever to have done any primary verification.) It's a pity he attempted the task, which is difficult and thankless, even when properly done, because such things go out of date quickly. Once that has happened they become not only increasingly useless but actively misleading, and in a concise literary dictionary purporting to offer basic and durable information they are an unlooked for and gratuitously disfiguring element. I know Stapleton was trying to be helpful, but bibliography isn't the most sociable of media and we've seen that his friendliest intentions aren't his own best friend anyway.

Stapleton's articles are unsigned not (like those of the Oxford Companion) because he is self-effacing, but because he has announced himself at the outset as the "author" of the whole thing. There are two signed articles by other persons, however. The first, by C. H. Sisson, is on the Bible in English. It begins with a brief history of the early translations, and a vivid statement of the pervasive influence of the Authorized Version and the Book of Common Prayer on English speech and English letters. There follows an onslaught on revisions and translations since the Authorized Version, including the Revised Version, as "increasingly reckless": "there have been a number of new versions since then, none of them of any literary value... One of the keys to a thousand years of English thought and literature is being thrown away." One can witness here in slow motion the process by which "enthusiasm" encroaches on the obligation to supply facts, the polemical element at first vitalizing the historical account, then drawing attention to itself more than to the information it is offering, and finally abandoning the informational element altogether. You would not guess from this account, for example, that there was such a thing as the New English Bible. If you knew already, the omission is pointed and telling. But if you didn't, what has become of the Guide's function as a reference book? The split purposes of this volume, which tries to be both a personal statement and a dictionary, are more spectacularly evident in Sisson's contribution than in Stapleton's broad-and-butter entries, because it is so well written and because the derelictions of duty have not been blundered into but deliberately cultivated as rhetorical ploys.

The other signed entry, by the late Barbara Strong on the English Language, demonstrates by contrast how strong conviction can coexist with a responsible informative coverage. It is the best and only really good thing in the entire volume. Strong displays with quiet competitiveness the professional linguist's commitment to variety in linguistic usage, and the sardonic recognition that the language in its written and especially literary forms has a normative or standardizing or, at the other extreme, a distorting tendency, both as historical evidence, and as active influence on the spoken language. Written English, the "vehicle of literature", which "prevails worldwide, with only trivial divergences", is an abstraction from the infinite variety of spoken English, both native-regional and international (native speakers, she notes, are probably now in a minority). "Even when writers attempt to portray dialect their portrayal has for centuries been mediated by the conventions of standard orthography."

An account of English, both descriptive and historical, follows: "The English sound system", the mixed origins of vocabulary from "earliest times, word-formation, the verb tense system, clause structure, are covered with masterly succinctness. So is the history of English as part of the Germanic situation of Indo-European languages." The interaction with Norman-French, the increasing use of English in documents, with its call for standardization, intensified by the advent of printing, the international

cloning of English (through exploration, trade and settlement from the sixteenth century and through a later development as the main language of science and technology). She ends:

It is no wonder that a language which has been the vehicle of much of the experience of so much of humanity should also be the vehicle of the world's richest literature, not only English literature but that of English-speaking communities in every continent and of an unparalleled number of great writers whose mother tongue was not English. Yet, as we have seen, "English" subsumes many Englishes... Constant vigilance is needed to save the inextinguishable well from turning into a snake-pit.

Such things have been said before, with varying emphasis, by pedants of the linguistic establishment as well as by people of generous outlook and of wide reading. But they have seldom been said with such authority and feeling by someone who was both a distinguished practitioner of the science of language and a learned and sensitive student of literature.

Three new double-volumes of the Dictionary of Literary Biography have just thudded into the world. They are *Companion*, which is just as well, for almost £100 each few readers would be able to afford their company. Reviewing them has provided me with weightlifting exercises for two weeks. They are opulently produced, but not handsome, with a glossy vulgarity that reminds one of expensive office furniture. They have a slightly anachronistic air of conspicuous consumption, with lots of space for words, and plenty of photographic novelties and playthings and jackets and pages of manuscript.

That being so, they are better equipped to resolve the complex claims of reference-book and personal statement than the concise non-specialist one-volume guide, and on the whole they do it rather well. Each entry is an extended essay on an author, with individual bibliographies, supplemented by a more general reading-list among the Appendices of each double-volume. The best group of Appendices is in Volume 12, on essays on the Royal Court, on "Fringe and Alternative Theatre", on the National Theatre and the RSC, and on "The End of English Stage-Censorship, 1945-1968". There are also statements, not now, by practicing playwrights (Pinter, Copeland, David Edgar). Volume 14 contains the best essay on British fiction since the 1930s, but offers more material on individual authors. Volume 15 has seventy pages of Appendix, and calls for so appropriate. There's a useful account of British literary prizes and their winners, and a list of films (with essays) from novels by authors included in the volume. But the rest is taken up with blowby disquisitions which could not Michael Stapleton a few tricks in the art of saying nothing.

The entries on individual authors vary in quality. Among those I enjoyed were Priscilla Marfin on Charles Blackwood, S. J. Newman on Philip Brophy, Lorna Sage on Angela Carter, Alan Hollinghurst on A. N. Wilson, Michael North on Henry Green and Jay Hall on Angus Wilson. John Winnifrid's entries on John Benetotus and J. G. Farrell are brief and amusing, but Farrell has not got short measure. More places tend to be "by the way" Levitt for callous fatality, try the opening of his B. S. Johnson entry.

These volumes are on the whole competently executed, though the contributors are not always at their best with British idiom. Of British names and the proof-readers don't always get foreign words. But if you have many bookshelves and £300, and don't want to buy twenty copies of the Cambridge Guide, then these volumes may be of use to you.

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# Dumb spelled backwards is bmud

By Tom Disch

There is a way of writing verse, the easiest way of all, invented by proud Dundee's son, William McGonagall. And brought to perfection by America's own Ogden Nash. And that way's more or less like this -- to seem to dash Down what ever comes into your head with no concern For a regular metre, to churn Out line upon line with but a single object or rule: To make of Rhyme a tool.

For rhyme is what most people think of when they think of Poetry and when they complain they cannot love Those prickly modernist poets who scorn its use. Such poets, they believe, are like a cowboy trying to rope a steer without putting a knot in his nose.

That is a limited view, of course. But before we dismiss it out-of-hand we ought to consider the innate force Of Rhyme, as demonstrated in certain word-association tests given to people when they're sleepy or just woken up. In these tests, instead of associating words by sense, as in saying "Coffee" in response to "Cup", Words are linked by rhymes, so that if the tester calls out "Knife" A drowsy person would be likelier to answer "Wife" or "Strife" or even "Afterlife" Than "Pork", let us say, or "Play", even though such rhymes aren't logical ways to have replied. Unless one were actually or potentially an uxoriicide. In other words, as we sink deeper into our subconscious minds It is Rhyme with its irrational but potent magic that binds Subconsciously as "Womb" and "Tomb" into Platonic wholes And gives us that characteristic blip of pleasure at the moment the poem Or the magnetized words click together and we think, "Oh-ho, there's the rhyme!" Which, if it's a good one, will give you the sensation of taking a road test in a car that can stop on a dime: I.e., a feeling of "Whoops!" and "Just so!" both at the same time. Of a punishment both fitting and discomfiting in its relation to the crime.

What crime is that? you ask. Why, the crime of Routledge & Kegan Paul Who have the gall To print, bind, and market -- for £8.95! -- this keg of antiquated dust And to call it a Rhyming Dictionary\*. Even the Introduction by L. H. Dawson admits that for any purpose but solving crosswords it's a bust:

"... For we find in juxtaposition such words as *bathe and judize, marthine And centime* -- which do not rhyme At all -- while many perfect rhymes, such as *yes and survey, doe and blow*, Are separated by hundreds of pages." So, While it is possible to find a serviceable rhyming dictionary to help you through those awkward moments in a sonnet or a villanelle when on rhyme comes to mind (my own choice is *Clement Wood's Complete Rhyming Dictionary and Poet's Craft Book*),

I can't think why anyone would want a copy of this daft book, Whose sole principle of organization is reverse alphabetical order. It's about as useful an invention as a tape recorder That will only play tapes backwards or a door guaranteed to stick. Why, because some wretched pedant in 1775 with the brick For a brain decides to prescribe inversion on English spelling Should a publisher in A.D. 1983 continue selling His ancient dumb idea? I can't believe it! Could I have dreamt or Imagined the whole thing? No, here's the book, and my last word on it is: *Caveat emptor!*

\*J. Walker, Walker's Rhyming Dictionary of the English Language, revised and enlarged by Lawrence H. Dawson; supplement compiled by Michael Freeman (583pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £8.95).

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## to the editor

## Language Acquisition

Sir, - T. P. Waldron evidently wants to increase the number of unemployed. Provoked by my review (April 29) of *Language Acquisition*, edited by Eric Wanner and Lisa Gleitman, he writes (May 13) that the only people who find the learning of a first language problematic are academics, who have a vested interest in treating it as problematic, and he complains of "the disproportionate amount of the academic budget which is channelled into this academic frolic".

Since Waldron believes the problem is simple, he should devise a computer program that will learn any natural language, and he should show that it learns in the same way as children. If he is averse to programming, he should use any other method of establishing that his theory is rigorous, complete and consistent. And by all means let him apply for funds to employ whoever he wishes to help him. His success will effect a considerable saving: he will put out of business Chomsky, Putnam, Miller, and all their colleagues in linguistics, philosophy and psychology, who have worked, and go on working, on the problem.

If Waldron takes up this challenge, he will have my admiration and apologies. If he succeeds in meeting it, he will receive universal acclaim. However, if he does not take up the challenge, the obvious inference is that he realizes that the problem of language acquisition is not simple enough for him to solve, or that he does not seriously think that a large saying in public money is worth a few weeks of his own work - in short, that his letter was just an academic frolic.

P. N. JOHNSON-LAIRD.  
MRC Applied Psychology Unit,  
15 Chaucer Road, Cambridge.

## Yiddish Literature

Sir, - I made no plea, impassioned or otherwise, for the "revival" of Yiddish (April 20). It has never died. Stephen Corrin (Letters, May 13) may have encountered only homely, homespun and bawdy phrases - but no one who reads the writings of Perls, or the Singers, or the Yiddish lyric poets, can doubt its wider expressive range. Many who were brought up without Yiddish (as I was) are now discovering this for themselves, and to cherish the Yiddish literary tradition is not to offer disrespect to Hebrew or its ancient and modern monuments.

S. S. PRATER.  
The Queen's College, Oxford.

## Arms Control

Sir, - In his review of my book, *With Enough Shovels* (March 18), Lawrence Freedman asserts that I fail to recognize the diversity of views within the Reagan administration. It is suggested that I dwell on the hawks in the government and ignore the more reasonable and pragmatic members of the Reagan administration.

Freedman specifically cites Robert Burt, and states: "Burt was not interviewed by Scheer, and is quoted out of context to make him appear a dogmatic opponent of any negotiations." This is an astonishing statement, since I state clearly in the book (but I did, in fact, interview Burt, and excerpts from those interviews are included in the text). I would have liked to have directly quoted Burt more extensively, but for reasons of his own he insisted that many of his remarks be kept off the record or on a non-attribution basis. However, these private remarks, offered in three separate sessions with Burt, did not evidence any hope for arms control.

Regarding Burt's writing, I believe I quoted him fairly when I used the following quotation from an article he wrote in *Defence* (Winter 1981):

Arms control has developed the same kind of mindless momentum associated with other large-scale government pursuits. Conceptual notions of limited durability, such as

the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, have gained bureaucratic constituencies and have thus been prolonged beyond their usefulness. There are strong reasons for believing that arms control is unlikely to possess much utility in the coming decade.

One can only assume that the views Burt communicated in his interviews and writings provide an accurate summary of his position on arms control.

Freedman's review seemed determined to marshal arguments to support his preconceived view that there is ideological diversity within the Reagan administration. My hook provides considerable evidence to the contrary and I am left with the uncomfortable impression that Freedman went to great lengths to disagree with *With Enough Shovels* without really bothering to read it.

ROBERT SCHEER.  
c/o Los Angeles Times, Times  
Mirror Square, Los Angeles,  
California 90053.

## John Payne Collier

Sir, - It is unfortunate that Arthur Freeman's commentary on the crimes of John Payne Collier had to be coupled with a review of *Fortune and Men's Eyes* (April 22). His zeal for prosecution has swamped his sense of the reviewer's responsibility, and this has coloured his commentary and distorted the subject of my book. The book he would write "would be a systematic account of everything Collier has been accused of - even if every instance was now thought a canard", i.e. he would try the man and convict him - as all other commentators on the subject have done for the last hundred years. My intention, explicitly stated several times in the book, is different: to examine the sequence of events that led to charges of forgery against Collier in his lifetime. I have not been concerned with proving or disproving forgery per se - that I leave to others - but only with the way Collier came to be accused of fabricating these disputed documents. Neither is my intention, as Freeman misstates it, to prove Collier innocent of all charges of forgery and guile, or of virtually everything but credibility and having enemies by intention, which I think I faithfully followed. I do determine the historical events of the developing controversy, to scrutinize the evidence it produced, and, in the light of these, to consider the case against Collier as it was ultimately presented in Maosfield Ingley's *A Complete View of the Shakespeare Controversy*, the book on which all subsequent accusations against Collier, including Freeman's own, have been based. Freeman has simply ignored this intention. The confusion of his objectives is best illustrated by the fact that his review mentions Ingley only once as a "minor" character and *A Complete View* not at all - although he quotes that book, perhaps unconsciously, at least once.

Freeman declares, "The [Perkins] Folio is the star of the book", and in his star-gazing he has ignored the detailed discussion of the folio and the bulk of the evidence that have produced to support its authenticity. In my book, its genuineness is on only ten. In this narrow scope, he takes issue with my description of the marginal cuts made when the book was re-bound in the eighteenth century. Our disagreement here is based on two errors: one is mine; the other, I think, is Freeman's. My error, I think, is typographical one; the footnoted page reference to the *Romeo and Juliet* example was misprinted. It should read 287 rather than 282 (i.e. two leaves farther on in the text, a typographical error that I regret and that Freeman did not recognize. Freeman has erred in defining "emendations" very narrowly to include only ink writing which "corrects" the text. In the context we are addressing, the term encompasses other marginalia, not only actual corrections of the text but also any ink writing made at the same time. Since the point is to determine when the writing was made, not its content, this is a reasonable definition of the term. In all five of my examples of limited durability, such as

trimming. There can be no serious disagreement that some emendations are cut - even Frederic Madden noted it.

In the space of a letter I cannot discuss Freeman's "simple explanation" for the correlations between Perkins Folio emendations and the Q1 *Titus Andronicus*. I can only say that it is much too simple, that it was my own first "explanation" for the correlations, and that I later discarded it because it assumes a much more suppositious sequence than the hypothesis I describe. Freeman disallows the "reading" (for "now") emendation because, although he cannot read it and "is not sure what it is", he is certain it is not "pleading". The erasure has indeed made the remaining ink very faint, and we read it differently, but Freeman agrees that it is there, and there is no disagreement that it was an emendation for "now". Given those facts, Freeman fails to explain why in the three centuries before the T4 Q1 was discovered in 1904 only the Perkins Folio emendator suggested any alternative for "now", a misprint which all earlier editions of the play, including Collier's own both before and after his discovery of the Folio - accepted without question.

Freeman's account would have his reader believe that the Old Corrector accepted only two of "over a hundred" suggested alternatives in the T4 Q1: this is a misconception. The vast majority of the differences between Q1 and Q2 are, as Joseph Quincy Adams pointed out, obvious transmission errors which were corrected before the Second Folio (i.e. the Perkins Folio edition) was printed. The remaining substantial alternatives which the Old Corrector would have found in Q1 were very few, scarcely more than a dozen, of which he adopted six, a significant fact which Freeman fails to make clear.

These are the only substantive arguments in Freeman's review which concern the subject of my book (as distinguished from his interest in detailing the crimes of Collier). He does, however, make several errors of fact or inference which only someone who had read my book or knew the evidence could recognize. For example, he chides me for being "blind to the significance of Malone's personal transcript" of the manuscript of *Henry's diary*, implying that a comparison reveals the date of the forgeries in the manuscript and support for his conviction that Collier made them. Only a reader who has consulted the transcript could appreciate how seriously Freeman has misdescribed it: it is not in Malone's hand, it cannot be dated exactly, and, most significant, it lacks pages of the original manuscript on which disputed insertions occur. Indeed, if "Malone's personal transcript" is as significant as Freeman says, some of its evidence disproves his contention.

Freeman seriously misstates the facts concerning the testimonies of Henry Wellesley and Will Warner (whom he does not identify). He declares that their evidence (that the Perkins Folio was emended before it came into Collier's possession) was "struggled off in their time as useless, for the recollections they embody are too faint and too long to be of any use to the reader of my book should know the unequivocal testimony of Wellesley and Warner's testimony given independently of one another, was not 'struggled off' by those who knew it - Madden and Ingley suppressed it and began the lie that Wellesley 'refused' to be cross-examined". In receding Ingley's falsehood, Freeman makes perfectly clear, by onerous example, just how Ingley's falsification has begun.

Freeman also misstates my declared opinions: for example, he says that I accept "as we all have, that the marginalia are in a modern hand", having earlier indicated that his definition of "modern" is "mid-eighteenth century" (that is, while the Folio was in Collier's possession). I make it clear that I think the writing was made in the eighteenth century. Of the dozen emendations (of *Titus*

*Andronicus* in the Perkins Folio) which have nothing to do with Q1, and quote my text - omitting the clause in which I mention them! Of the "ravenous" emendation, he says, "Collier later cast doubt on its 'necessity', a typical gesture of disingenuousness... meant to take in the sceptics, and it takes in Gansel"; this is a distorted reference to my remark that Collier reinstated - without comment - the faulty "heinous" reading in his last edition of Shakespeare, a circumstance which I believe demonstrates he did not know the Perkins Folio emendation ("ravenous") was a valid reading from Q1.

There are other errors of fact and inference in the review, but these examples may be sufficient to illustrate the ways in which Freeman's perspective has distorted his reading of my book.

I seek the fullest examination of Collier's career and have not lightly or arbitrarily discounted the opinion that scholars have adopted for the last century, but I think the discussion should be built on fresh consideration, not on the rubble of innuendo, suspicion, and unexamined preconceptions. Collier's "guilt" is based on the fact that he was the first to publish the disputed manuscript, but this judgment ignores the historical fact that casual forgery was rife in the eighteenth century and that all the manuscript collections that were used at that time contain many potential forgeries. Since Collier was the first scholar systematically to print complete manuscript transcriptions, and since he was no better able to detect forgery than his contemporaries, it was inevitable that he would publish fabrications that earlier readers, for unknown reasons, had inserted in the Alenay papers, the Bridgewater papers, the Stationers' Register, et al. It is, apparently, hard for Collier's accusers to accept the possibility that he may have been the unwitting purveyor of fabrications made by others. The assumption that he created the forgeries he published is based on a false case made against him by Ingley and others, a case that has been accepted, heretofore without examination. Freeman's list of forgeries is useful (although not novel or unique), but it cannot advance the examination of these imputed fabrications unless it is freed from his announced intention to indict a forger, be Collier or anyone else. In his zeal, Freeman has distorted my objectives without achieving his own.

DEWEY GANZEL.  
Department of English, Oberlin  
College, Oberlin, Ohio 44074.

## J. M. Synge

Sir, - As publisher of the *Collected Works of J. M. Synge* reviewed by John Elsom (March 25), and discussed by Adrian Room in his letter of April 29, may I clarify some points?

The bibliographical information at the beginning of the review stated that the Editor was Robin Skelton. This is incorrect: while Professor Skelton was the General Editor he himself edited only Volume 1, the *Poems*. Volume 2 (the *Plays*) was edited by the late Alan Price and Volumes 3 and 4 (the *Plays*) by Ann Saddlemyer.

As we stated in the blurb of the first volume, this edition was originally published by Oxford University Press, and was republished by agreement with them. (The version of the title pages also make it clear that Oxford were the original publishers.) The terms of this permission allowed us to make minor corrections, but not major revisions. Before publication I asked the editors for any such corrections they wanted to have included, and we incorporated all we were sent.

It is the first time that these volumes have been available in paperback format. It is also the first time that they have been published in the United States. Copyright difficulties prevented publication there in the 1960s, when they were available throughout the rest of the world.

COLIN SMYTHE.  
Colin Smythe Ltd, PO Box 6,  
Garrards Cross, Buckinghamshire.

## Dictionaries and Trade Marks

Sir, - I do not see why two of our correspondents (Letters, April 29) are apparently puzzled as to why owners of registered trade marks should trouble to prevent their general use. The reason is simple and clear-cut: if it can be demonstrated that a word registered as a trade mark has passed into the general store of language in everyday use, then the law is such that the owner of the trade mark could have difficulty in enforcing his right to exclusivity. He would be especially vulnerable when the time came to renew his registration.

For this reason, over the years the owners of trade marks like *Vaseline* and *Carborundum* have been particularly vigilant in protecting their rights; while, at the other end of the scale, celluloid has lost its trade-mark standing, in this country at least, and the manufacturers of the original dried engines, though they fought hard at the end, eventually lost their right to protection because the word had become generally used as a common noun.

Having said that, however, may I add my voice to those expressing dismay and concern at the proposed EEC legislation as it affects the publishers of reference books? I am sure, as every sane person must be, that the legislation, as it relates to general works of reference, is misconceived and mischievous.

W. T. McLEOD.  
Collins Publishers, Glasgow.

## Verse in Translation

Sir, - Charles Tomlinson (Letters, May 6) complains that *The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation* edited by him, is not mentioned in the review of Richard Stoneman's *Stephen Laurel* (April 15). *Stephen Laurel* is quite different from Tomlinson's in the terms it sets itself and in feeling. The essential thing about it is that it confines itself to translation from classical poetry. So far as I know it is unique in this. The Oxford anthology covers the whole range of verse translation from Portuguese epic to Parnassian dodecasyllable. Of course there is some common ground; that is in the nature of the anthologies. But my concern in the limited space allowed me was with the book under review. Tomlinson himself suggests that in speaking of a "long forgotten" tradition, he is referring to the introduction to the *Oxford Book of Verse*. I am simply using the obvious phrase to say what is obviously true. The general reflections on translation in my review have nothing to do with the experience.

ROBERT WELLS.  
30 Hungeate Street, Aylesbury,  
Norfolk.

## 'Romeo and Juliet'

Sir, - Tony Horvay's poultry expert informs him that a cockerel's (letter, May 13), he is very small. Let me tell you that as my butcher tells me that one may be as large as a chicken's heart - quite big enough for a bump of this size - a cockerel's bawdy to be worthy of remark. Direct research into this fundamental matter seems to be required. In the matter seems to be required. In the meantime, the Nurse's interest in a subject may be illuminated by a citation in *OED* from Andrew Boorde's *Diary of 1542*: "The cockerel, that bath no! done his kin, be, nutritive." And an additional dimension is provided by *OED*: "cockerel" was figuratively applied to a young man - as in *The Tempest*, 2.1.31.

STANLEY WELLS.  
The Oxford Shakespeare, 40 Walton  
Crescent, Oxford.

"Among this week's contributors appears on page 527."

## Liberation of a libertarian

Mark Abley

## GEORGE WOODCOCK

Letter to the Past  
329pp. Toronto: Fitzhenry and  
Woods.  
089027153

To the young Cyril Connolly, the chariot and bugios that threatened to strangle the talent of young writers flourished in journalism, politics, teaching and other seductive professions. But Connolly was an Old Etonian who, even in 1938, could begin *Enemies of Promise* with an unconscious description of lunch in Provence. It would scarcely have occurred to him that one of an artist's worst enemies might be an office job with the Great Western Railway. Yet Connolly's book appeared while the aspiring poet and novelist George Woodcock was beginning his tenth year of servitude as a clerk aboard Paddington Station. "I can remember months on end," Woodcock writes now, "during which I returned home of an evening so dispirited that I would sit down after dinner with a pack of cards and play patience for hours on end because I had no urge to do anything else." The remark is especially telling in light of his tremendous capacity for hard work. The story seems to have a happy ending: in 1940 a small legacy enabled him to leave the Great Western and to become a full-time writer. Since then he has produced almost fifty books. In Canada, where he has lived since 1949, he has become a justifiable cliché to speak of him as the country's foremost man of letters.

His achievements are manifold, yet it may be appropriate to rehearse them for a moment. Woodcock is a master of the ill-defined territory where literary criticism meets intellectual biography; although his studies of Herbert Read and Oscar Wilde, Aldous Huxley and Aphra Behn, George Orwell and Thomas Merton have usually been praised as superb, few have been surpassed. Equally important, his examinations of Godwin, Proudhon, Kropotkin and the Doukhobors have restored to our age the sense that anarchism can be a creative, generous movement rather than a futile doctrine of wastefulness and violence. Woodcock's descriptions of India, Latin America and the South Pacific (along with his studies of early explorers and naturalists) have established him as a first-rate travel-writer. For seven years in the 1940s he edited the journal *Now* (which bears no relation at all to Sir James Symonds's much the best periodical of a radical kind in England). A decade later he founded the journal *Canadian Literature*, which he was to edit for eighteen years, usually managing to make it lively and scholarly at once. His assortment of books about Canadian literature, politics and culture shows how deeply he has entered into his adopted native land. He has also written with distinction in the field of history, art criticism and drama. Yet the twin desires of the unhappy railwayman - to create first-class fiction and poetry - have borne scanty fruit. Woodcock destroyed the only three novels he wrote, and although the neglect his verse now suffers is unwarranted, he will never be regarded as a major poet. For all his pride in what he has accomplished, a lingering sense of unfulfilled promise casts a certain direction over his memoirs intended more as a defiant celebration than as a lament.

For more than half his life, Woodcock was Canadian only by virtue of infancy. He was born in Winnipeg in 1912, but left five months later when his parents decided to return to their native Shropshire. Samuel Woodcock, George's beloved father, was a pianist and railway clerk who had emigrated rather than accept work in the family's coal business; "I think of my father, too gentle to rebel, too obedient to comply, taking his own course; and retreating, from a physical as well as a moral view." After a few years of odd jobs in the wilds, Samuel Woodcock was to swallow his final pride and serve as a steel-dealer in Market Drayton,

but this too he found unendurable, and for the last nine years of a short life he worked as the railway goods-clerk in Marlow. George, like so many writers, was an only child. He grew up in two places: a crumbling terraced house near the Thames, where he spent most of the year, and a mansion on the edge of Market Drayton, where he passed every holiday there in a state of wide-eyed liberty. Shropshire fired his imagination; some of the most vivid pages in *Letter to the Past* are those recalling the pines and fairs, the stables and angling, the stall-holders and rabbit-catchers of a county still in touch with pre-industrial civilization. In Marlow he could gather knowledge; in Shropshire he was gathered up by images.

But the idyll died soon after Woodcock's father. Instead of taking the Oxford Senior Certificate, the boy acquired a petty job with the Great Western Railway in order to support himself and his mother, with whom he continued to live. A robust, possessive, bitter woman, she could easily have dominated her son's autobiography had not Woodcock felt compelled, even now, to keep her at a distance. "When I was very young I would often ask my mother as I ate my porridge, 'What are you going to do today, mammy?' And she, in her sardonic way, would laugh, and say, 'Go out in my mind for change of air!'" At school in the 1920s he had expected to become a writer; but the 1930s brought silence and desolate frustration. Though he doesn't say so explicitly, he must have come close to a nervous breakdown several times. Admittedly the rigours of working five-and-a-half days a week, fifty weeks a year, granted him a discipline, a will and an almost unquenchable thirst for fresh experience that have served him well in later years. It is characteristic that he preferred to gobble a light meal at his desk so that every day he could use the lunch-hour for long walks of discovery. Only after his mother's fatal heart attack in May, 1940 did he feel free to leave the railway and (thanks to a small trust bequeathed by his grandfather) live off his wits in London.

Yet the long drudgery of work in the Depression had coloured his perceptions and earlier ambitions. Reading William Morris alone in a railway carriage one evening, Woodcock had been converted to a belief in social revolt; for a short while he was a member of the Marlow Labour Party, and he flirted with communism. But he was already a convinced pacifist, and through pacifism he arrived at the kind of libertarian anarchism which he has espoused for more than forty years. The communist attacks on anarchists in Republican Spain strengthened his new beliefs: "It was natural that I should be attracted towards the anarchists, who exposed the psychosis of the power-hungry and who rejected government at the same time as they affirmed freedom." Woodcock has remained a steadfast idealist in politics, criticizing coercion in all its forms and believing that war springs from the organization of society, not from the

## The Discovery

The summer the steam dried up we tried following its bed deep between the high tree-shut-in banks almost a tunnel: no one had walked that way before, nor could they now the water re-occupies the course we clambered: one cries at finding stones shaped to our delight echoed and re-echoed chambered in earth and leaves: if no one followed us into the dusty thicket then we were the first and last men on the moon

Charles Tomlinson

nature of men and women. Long before "Small is beautiful" became a catchphrase, he was quietly asserting the value of diversity, eccentricity and small-scale industry. In his book *Herbert Read: the Stream and the Source*, he praised Read's concept of "education through art as an anarchist strategy, more effective than outdated strategies of violent insurrection... he proposes to equip with an effective method the conception of revolution by change of heart that has haunted for centuries at least one current of the libertarian tradition, that which runs from seventeenth-century Winstanley through Godwin and Tolstoy, to Gandhi in our own age." Such is the tradition which Woodcock has made his own, exploring it with both persistence and eloquence.

After his mother's death he was free to commit himself to peace and liberty at a time when most of his countrymen were, as he saw it, in bondage to war. In *Anarchy or Chaos*, published in 1944, he claimed that "Mr Churchill and Mr Bevin differ only in degree and not in kind from Herr Hitler and Dr Ley. All four are concerned to destroy the liberty of the individual, as their actions tell more truly than their speeches." By then his whereabouts were unknown to the authorities; having worked at Middleton Murry's pacifist community in Essex, for the way, would laugh, and say, "Go out in my mind for change of air!" At school in the 1920s he had expected to become a writer; but the 1930s brought silence and desolate frustration. Though he doesn't say so explicitly, he must have come close to a nervous breakdown several times. Admittedly the rigours of working five-and-a-half days a week, fifty weeks a year, granted him a discipline, a will and an almost unquenchable thirst for fresh experience that have served him well in later years. It is characteristic that he preferred to gobble a light meal at his desk so that every day he could use the lunch-hour for long walks of discovery. Only after his mother's fatal heart attack in May, 1940 did he feel free to leave the railway and (thanks to a small trust bequeathed by his grandfather) live off his wits in London.

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The strengths of *Letter to the Past* are also the strengths of Woodcock's previous work: spruce, clean prose; a lucidity with facts and ideas; and a remarkable visual sense which enables him to recollect prisoners-of-war marching through Alfincham in 1917 as clearly as if they had trudged past him a week ago. Portraits of communities that he visited - the Welsh village of Llanybri during the war, Basel and Paris in 1946 - not only attest to his gifts as a travel-writer; they show the extent to which he makes observation a part of morality. In the Rhonda Valley in 1935, while he observed out-of-work miners squatting to play pitch-and-toss on vacant lots, using flat pebbles in place of the coins that none of them possessed, he was passed by a ragged, buched man

whistling the "Red Flag": "slowly and mournfully, so that it sounded like a dirge, in that dead valley the song of rebellious labour has become a lament." He evokes the sordid glamour of literary London no less finely. One is constantly struck by Woodcock's fairness: this is not an autobiography written with the aim of settling old scores.

Unfortunately, however, his devotion to literature sometimes takes precedence over his emotions about life. Or has memory made the two indistinguishable? On the second to last page Woodcock tells us nothing about his feelings as he crossed the Atlantic for the first time since infancy; instead, he informs us of the book that he was reading. Furthermore, his sterling effort not to be bitter can produce a curious sense of flatness; even now he apparently finds it painful to write about his mother. Whistling to maintain the copyright on certain other lives, he preserves a total silence about his wife, apart from mentioning that they met at a party in 1943. But silence can distort. Discussing his troubles as an anarchist in the war, and the reasons why he left England a few years later, he surely should have told the reader that his wife is German.

Although Woodcock is not given to

undervaluing his achievements, he ends the book with a tacit admission of something approaching failure, by promising that his second volume of memoirs will be "more reflective". One occasionally senses that sheer volume of knowledge in his capacious memory may have crowded out some of the fears, rages, dreams and delights that could have brought *Letter to the Past* even more vividly to life. Often its tone is surprisingly neutral. To complain, however, is churlish. As a clear-sighted, unsentimental account of the making of an English writer under difficult and unusual circumstances, Woodcock's autobiography is an important document as well as a provocative book. It is a pity that so far it has appeared only in Canada, where one or two critics have been baffled by the exuberance of local detail and have commented unkindly on the irrelevance in the 1980s of Shropshire dells. But Shropshire made George Woodcock; to his infinite credit, poverty, his mother and the Great Western Railway failed to undo him. None of his physical or intellectual travels have lessened his savage indignation or lessened his voracious mind, and the sooner a British publisher allows his former countrymen the chance to find that out for themselves, the better.

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# The flight from dogmatics

Roy Porter

BARBARA J. SHAPIRO

Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationships between Natural Science, Religion, History, Law and Literature. 347pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £30.30. 0 691 05379 0

Addressing the problem of the "great instauration" of the seventeenth century, Barbara J. Shapiro adopts an approach resembling Christopher Hill's in his *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*. She boldly asserts that analyses which pit the arts and sciences against each other are anachronistic, since the trajectory of the mind was then seamless, woven from the common threads of shared texts (above all, the Scriptures) by polymaths like Bacon. The thesis which follows from this is that such disciplines as natural philosophy, theology, law, history and belles lettres changed, they underwent common transformations in methodology, increasingly adopting empiricism and probability. This flight from dogmatics Professor Shapiro sees as the intellectual origin of the Enlighten-

ment, and the foundation of modern Western intellectual inquiry.

Few would dispute that the Stuart century was a watershed in epistemology, inquiry and argument. "Science" – as Shapiro contends – had traditionally implied the quest for certitude (a life-jacket against the maelstrom of scepticism), and so had given pride of place to the demonstrative arts of syllogistic logic and geometry. Mere empiricism had long skulked under a cloud (irredeemably vulgar, tainted by "empirics", and riddled by the corruption of the senses); and the probable lay within the domain of rhetoric and sophistry. A mental revolution, however, was worked by such giants as Bacon, Boyle, Newton and Locke, ambitious to deconstruct tyrannical dogmas. Combating authority with experience, they cultivated probable knowledge by clothing it in the purple of experimental rigour and the *novum organum* of induction, by capitalizing on the ocular appeal of instruments and quantification, and by distancing themselves from such equivocal allies as "theory". Once sense experience had stopped being an Achilles heel, the march of mind could quicken to the rousing strains of "moral certainty".

How the metaphysics of the New Science were forged is a success story told many times before, and Shapiro

acknowledges her debts to a distinguished line of historians of ideas, encompassing Burtt, R. F. Jones, Herschel Baker, Willy van Leeuwen, Hacking, Kuhn, and many others. But she gives the familiar tale two twists. She promotes some of the usual lower-order batting – men such as Wollis, Willis and Wilkins – up the card. And above all she sets "science" alongside other studies: in theology, the development of a Latitudinarian temper; in history, what F. Smith Fussner has termed the "revolution in historiography"; in law, new criteria of judicial evidence and testimony; and in letters, anti-rhetorical currents. This is a valuable move, not least in confirming how anachronistic it would be to cast the natural sciences as the stormtroopers of methodological break-through, leaving divinity and literature behind as stragglers and camp-followers. Rather, science was mixed up in a general charge, and Shapiro plausibly suggests, the heavy brigade, if there was one, was rational theology, smiting Calvinist literalism and popish fideism.

Yet there are serious limitations in the conception and execution of this book. Tracing "the art of the probable", Shapiro singles out its pioneers, and points to the "steps" of its ascent. But such an approach reeks of question-begging "essentialism" and teleology, and this in its turn is accentuated by her arbitrariness in

selection. Anglicans, for instance, are richly covered, but the Interregnum Puritans (studied by Charles Webster) are short-changed, being summarily dismissed as "naïve". A "lumper" rather than a "splitter", Shapiro shaves off inconvenient corners so that people slot snugly into the schema. Thus, despite recent scholarship, the Cambridge Platonists are placed down into Latitudinarians, and Newton the believer appears only as a Latitudinarian rather than as the heretical eschatologist that he was. It may well be – as she argues – that "the orderly mechanical world of the scientists of the mid and late seventeenth century left... less room for the supernatural", but if so, how do we explain who Newton, Glanville and More positively exulted in branches in its mechanism?

Professor Shapiro treats her authors as intellectual history fodder, and assumes that devising a coherent methodology was their delight. "For Enlightenment, the central intellectual phenomenon of the second half of the seventeenth century," she writes, "was the peculiar interaction between efforts to establish a rational basis for an historically based nondogmatic Protestant Christianity and comparable efforts to achieve a probabilistic basis for the factual assertions of scientists, historians and lawyers." I don't know what Pepsy, Dryden and Aubrey would have made of that. But

this is, as she herself admits, to do "history of ideas" in its most traditional way. But can we any longer study scientific method in isolation from propaganda uses? Employing the sociology of knowledge and Marxist analysis of ideological domination, James Jacob, Margaret Jacob, Simon Schaffer, Steven Shapin and many others have aimed to strip the mask from empiricism and reveal its hegemonic functions. As a rhetorical device, it was a bid (they argue) to monopolize the theatre of knowledge (wasn't empiricism experiencing reality directly? wasn't seeing believing?) upstaging the truth claims of others, such as religious radicals. Of course, the rise of probabilism was a crude conspiracy; but such critical readings need to be taken into account, and it is odd to find a book nowadays taking the metaphysical origins of modern thought merely at face value, without engaging to discussions of ideology and legitimization.

Within its genre, this is a well-crafted synthesis, albeit written in pudding prose. Students, however, must be wary, as it is full of niggling minor errors. For example, not only does Cambridge Platonist appear throughout as "Cudsworth" and intellectual historian David Oldroyd always as "Olyroyd", but, staggeringly, in a work discussing hypothesis, Newton's "hypotheses and fingo" is misquoted.

rather unattractive promise of providing an "analytical framework" understanding the popularity of scientific culture in Britain is badly fulfilled.

The other authors seem more interested in history and have specific topics to keep them down to earth. Their diverse and loosely connected essays make the book a valuable occasional, as in Steven Shapin's chapter on the diffusion of science. Edith Wharton's conclusion appended to an interesting tale; but anyone who is interested in finding out what kind of people in a number of different places were attracted to science, and what they hoped to get out of it, will have much to read about power struggles within the Royal Society; about London lecturing; about the British Mineralogical Society; about science for the lower orders in Edinburgh; and for the determination to control those institutions and lectures and science seemed to support the status quo; and about Yorkshire geology; and about the light that the cholera epidemic of 1831-2 threw on the state of the medical profession, deeply divided, socially and nervous about scientific nostrums.

As Jack Morrell remarks in his paper, a proper balance between the general and the particular is vital to the social history of science. Any writing about atomic theory or relativity magnetism in the early twentieth century knows that it is one of something important, and the same would be true if it were concerned with the universities of Edinburgh or London. This conviction is borne out, however, when faced with a provincial institution perhaps forgotten, or with a rather dull programme of lectures. It is a pity that the authors assembled here did not manage to soften to bring their subjects to life. One may nevertheless suspect that the categories, of professional status, marginality and so on, to which they resort to in the general part of their discussions should not be taken too seriously. Like such philosophical paradigms, they may help to concentrate the mind, but they do not divert it into very real and relevant questions.

Whether the social history of science is in close association with intellectual history, can itself be a question rather and is open to question. Science may be an ordinary human activity, but its concern with finding out about the natural world makes its history both distinctive and interesting.

In the volume under review, hardly any scientific papers are cited or scientific discoveries alluded to. The introductory chapter by Ian Inkster is an attempt at a synthesis of the others; presenting the book as an occasion by which young Turks, using sociological rather than philosophical categories to explore past science. The book is thus a social history of scientific culture. The question why science has become so prestigious in our culture is not altogether a simple one, nor is it clear what the attractions of science are. Inkster points to entertainment and moral uplift, and no doubt social mobility was also an aim of some who took an interest in self-improvement and the march of intellect. This opening chapter is heavy going, and its

philosophy of science depends upon the belief that good science is the disinterested pursuit of truth using logic, analogy, experiment, observation and so on. But anybody who has looked at the history of science will be aware of careerism, opportunism and muddle, making it look altogether more ordinary. Intellectual satisfaction and practical usefulness have never been the sole attractions of the scientific life, and any purely rational reconstruction of past science is bound to be misleading. It is possible to go further, and write the history of science with the intellectual side left out altogether, so that institutions or minor scientific figures become the main focus.

Studies in History of Biology, No. 6, edited by William Coleman and Camille Limoges (219pp. Johns Hopkins, £9.80/18.95) contains essays by M. R. Hodge, Jane Watkinson and Donna Haraway.

## DIPLOMACY

ANTHONY VERRIER

Through the Looking Glass: British Foreign Policy in an Age of Illusions 385pp. Cape. £12.50. 0 224 01979 1

"Intelligence" is undoubtedly a significant component in the policy-making process. Its precise importance is a matter of conjecture since the organization and operation of intelligence services at home and abroad are shrouded in considerable mystery. Although the British government maintains an obsessively secretive attitude towards virtually all areas of its activity, in the case of intelligence this stance borders on the absurd. It is, for example, barely three years since the government for the first time formally acknowledged the existence in peace-time of both the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), popularly known as MI6 and the Security Service (MI5). Whitehall, however, goes to great lengths in order to maintain the fiction that the interception of foreign governments' communications does not occur. Earlier this year the Commons Select Committee on Education, while inquiring into public records policy, learned that "intercepts" from the 1919-39 period did not officially exist. There is, however, evidence to the contrary for those years and for more recent times. Stanley Baldwin, for example, told Parliament in 1927 that the government was reading Soviet diplomatic messages, and on April 3, 1982 Ted Rowlands (a junior minister in the Foreign Office, 1976-79) revealed to MPs that Britain had been intercepting Argentinian telegrams "for many years".

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## Calling for more research

Paul Kennedy

PETER ALTER

Wissenschaft, Staat, Mäzene Anfänge moderner Wissenschaftspolitik in Grossbritannien 1850-1920. 262pp. Stuttgart: Klett. DM96. 3 608 91070 0

In view of the current debate in this country on the purposes of higher education and the needs of science, Peter Alter's book is going to be of interest to more than historians. He not only traces the evolution of a modern "science policy" in Britain, but also has much to offer upon such critical issues as the role of the state, "applied" versus "pure" science, the social position of scientists, and the example of foreign competitors. It therefore addresses questions which are as important today as they were to certain perceptive late-Victorians and Edwardians.

At the beginning of this story, in the Britain of Peel and Cobden, the very idea of a national science policy would have seemed bewildering. The country had become the workshop of the world through a variety of causes, but a large-scale investment in the natural sciences and technology was not one of them. With the fruits of *laissez-faire* so evident, who could believe there was any role for the state?

In 1850-51 a mere £36,000 (or 0.9 per cent of governmental expenditure) was allocated to scientific research. In the educational sphere, where the public schools and the few ancient universities devoted themselves to turning out officers and gentlemen, there was a similar neglect. Scientific experimentation was therefore left to amateur enthusiasts, supported by aristocratic patrons and by local businessmen interested in developing their particular industry or in encouraging technical education. The only "national" bodies were the Royal Society and that array of more specialized institutions – the Royal Astronomical Society, the Chemical Society of London, the Royal Geographical Society, *et al.* – heterogeneous, not to say overlap and confusion, prevailed.

This situation changed little over the next few decades: a new society founded here, or slightly increased grant there, the opening of some regional college, mocked no watershed. The real change came, Dr Alter shows, with the fears at the turn of the century about Britain's future place in the world. Overtaken by Germany and the United States in industrial productivity, shocked by the Army's weaknesses in the Boer War, threatened by a whole series of imperial challenges, a large portion of the British political elite had quickly lost its mid-Victorian confidence. National efficiency and the struggle for survival were the slogans of the

day. Urged on by "constructive imperialists" such as Chamberlain, Rosebery, Haldane and the Webbs, the British nation's attitude to science changed dramatically. The funding for research and development spiralled upwards. Imperial College was founded, as was a whole array of great civic universities, with purposes manifestly different from those of Oxford, the National Physical Laboratory was set up, as was the Medical Research Committee. Many more rich men joined in support for science, but so too did the government. In this area also, the days of the night-watchman state were numbered.

In other words, a developed science policy took off in this country, not because of a concern for the topic *per se*, but primarily because of political and economic and military pressures. Where scientific research could show itself to be "practical", that is, of value to commerce or to the armed services or the public health, it could gain governmental support. Not surprisingly, Alter's study shows this trend accelerating with the coming of the First World War. "When you are engaged in a great war," argued one MP, "you have got to organise your civil side quite as much as your military and naval side. If you wish to be successful". The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research was, in consequence, an offspring of what was called "a war of chemists and engineers". By the 1920s, therefore, and despite other signs of a desire to return to Victorian *laissez-faire* practices, a reasonable and developed science policy – both institutionally and financially – had been erected. The state was now closely and irrevocably involved in the pursuit of science.

There is much else of value in *Wissenschaft, Staat, Mäzene* which cannot be described here; the details about private patronage, and about the social position of scientists, are extraordinarily interesting in their own right. There are extremely useful appendices, and a comprehensive bibliography. But the chief feature of this book is its portrayal of the interaction between scientific development and national needs, is the thing which will ensure it an important place in the historiography of western science and the growth of government.

Studies in History of Biology, No. 6, edited by William Coleman and Camille Limoges (219pp. Johns Hopkins, £9.80/18.95) contains essays by M. R. Hodge, Jane Watkinson and Donna Haraway.

## The institutional side

D. M. Knight

IAN INKSTER and JACK MORRELL (Editors)

Metropolises and Province: Science in British culture, 1780-1850. 288pp. Hutchinson. £17.50. 0 09 145180 9

It has quite often happened that provincials, like Franklin, Dalton, Mendel and Mendeleev, have made great scientific discoveries which have transformed the contemporary world. But in general provincial science might seem rather like provincial painting – something from which the talented escaped as speedily as possible to a metropolis. Certainly it is in major universities, museums and academies that most good science has been done, as particular institutions have enjoyed a brief or extended reign as "centre of excellence". To the historian of science the interest of an institution was chiefly that it was the setting for the achievements of a Dalton or a Faraday; places unassociated with the eminent aroused only antiquarian interest.

Philosophy of science depends upon the belief that good science is the disinterested pursuit of truth using logic, analogy, experiment, observation and so on. But anybody who has looked at the history of science will be aware of careerism, opportunism and muddle, making it look altogether more ordinary. Intellectual satisfaction and practical usefulness have never been the sole attractions of the scientific life, and any purely rational reconstruction of past science is bound to be misleading. It is possible to go further, and write the history of science with the intellectual side left out altogether, so that institutions or minor scientific figures become the main focus.

In the volume under review, hardly any scientific papers are cited or scientific discoveries alluded to. The introductory chapter by Ian Inkster is an attempt at a synthesis of the others; presenting the book as an occasion by which young Turks, using sociological rather than philosophical categories to explore past science. The book is thus a social history of scientific culture. The question why science has become so prestigious in our culture is not altogether a simple one, nor is it clear what the attractions of science are. Inkster points to entertainment and moral uplift, and no doubt social mobility was also an aim of some who took an interest in self-improvement and the march of intellect. This opening chapter is heavy going, and its

rather unattractive promise of providing an "analytical framework" understanding the popularity of scientific culture in Britain is badly fulfilled.

The other authors seem more interested in history and have specific topics to keep them down to earth. Their diverse and loosely connected essays make the book a valuable occasional, as in Steven Shapin's chapter on the diffusion of science. Edith Wharton's conclusion appended to an interesting tale; but anyone who is interested in finding out what kind of people in a number of different places were attracted to science, and what they hoped to get out of it, will have much to read about power struggles within the Royal Society; about London lecturing; about the British Mineralogical Society; about science for the lower orders in Edinburgh; and for the determination to control those institutions and lectures and science seemed to support the status quo; and about Yorkshire geology; and about the light that the cholera epidemic of 1831-2 threw on the state of the medical profession, deeply divided, socially and nervous about scientific nostrums.

As Jack Morrell remarks in his paper, a proper balance between the general and the particular is vital to the social history of science. Any writing about atomic theory or relativity magnetism in the early twentieth century knows that it is one of something important, and the same would be true if it were concerned with the universities of Edinburgh or London. This conviction is borne out, however, when faced with a provincial institution perhaps forgotten, or with a rather dull programme of lectures. It is a pity that the authors assembled here did not manage to soften to bring their subjects to life. One may nevertheless suspect that the categories, of professional status, marginality and so on, to which they resort to in the general part of their discussions should not be taken too seriously. Like such philosophical paradigms, they may help to concentrate the mind, but they do not divert it into very real and relevant questions.

Whether the social history of science is in close association with intellectual history, can itself be a question rather and is open to question. Science may be an ordinary human activity, but its concern with finding out about the natural world makes its history both distinctive and interesting.

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## Cutting down on make-believe

Keith Jeffery

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# Onomastic aetiologies The Great and the Good

J. H. C. Leach

## ADRIAN ROOM

Room's Classical Dictionary: The Origins of the Names of Characters in Classical Mythology 343pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £8.95. 0 7100 9262 8

The biographical note which appears on the dust-jacket of Room's *Classical Dictionary* informs us that this is the seventh dictionary that Adrian Room has compiled since 1979; it is intended as a work of "popular reference". Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that some errors have crept in; the trouble is that whereas classical scholars (who would not be bothered by them) are unlikely to make use of this dictionary, those others, not knowing Greek, for whom it is presumably intended, are liable to be misled. And since Mr Room deliberately gives no indication of the quantities of syllables, another potential source of confusion arises; there is, after all, an important difference between "lön" and "lön", or between "lego" and "lëgo". (Incidentally, Room has the annoying habit of citing verbs by the first person singular of the present tense, but translating them as though they were infinitives.) On the other hand, Room does make a point of including a number of words (eg. "pralino", "aëdon") where it is necessary but omitted, Greek is throughout transliterated, so it is a pity that in one of the very few cases where a Greek letter is printed, upsilon appears all too like a lower-case gamma.

Here, are some points of detail which, even if not important in themselves, cumulatively suggest that

some revision is called for. "[phios" can hardly mean "mighty"; it is an epithet used only of sheep, and probably means "fat" or "well-favoured". Bia, of the unlovely daughter Kratos and Bia in *Proteus Vincit*, is very probably female, but Room denotes her as masculine without comment; "geno" is not the Greek for "bear" (of children); is "gennän" intended? "Leös" is the Attic rather than the Ionic form of "laos" (people); if one is attempting to derive Hylas from "hyle", it is relevant that the first syllable of the name is short, whereas that of the common noun is long; "leros", "estia", "adros" all appear without their rough breathings, one of which, however, is imposed on "heleos" (for "eleos", pity); "dynamis" is not an adjective meaning "powerful"; in "Calchus", Calchus, it should be noted that the name begins with a kappa, whereas "chalkeos" starts with a chi; additionally, Room appears to have misread Liddell and Scott's "kalchano". "Pos" is probably a misprint for "pous"; misprints in the transliterations are not few. "Tainteros" is not the superlative of "talas" (wretched); "rhoë" (sic) is not the Greek for "flow", nor is "kapto" for "smite" ("kopto"). "Doxonai" is the future, not the present, of the Greek word meaning "receive"; "are" means "bane" or "ruin" rather than "prayer"; "arché" is not an adjective meaning "excellent"; a Greek word for "light" is not "lyce"; though it may be "lyce". The antiquarian William Camden, sixteenth-century (sv Agamemnon) or seventeenth-century (sv Cassandra); doubtless he spanned the century, if one is discussing the three (or four) Harpies. It is a pity not to name them (they all appear individually); especially as Room does list no fewer than forty of the hounds of Actaeon.

Room's main individual source appears to be Robert Graves (*Greek Mythology*, 1955), who is often acknowledged and sometimes misquoted, used without acknowledgment (compare Room and Graves on "Iro"); in general, attribution to sources, whether primary (Apollodorus, Pausanias, Hyginus) or secondary (eg. Camden, Smith, Graves, Keightley) is very sketchy, and the bibliography does not even include Roemer's great lexicon.

Room's style is determinedly chatty; "hymen o hymenale" is described as a "meaningless refrain like 'hi-di-hi' or 'ee-ee-ee'"; Pluto leads Room to mention of "11-year-old Yonastia Burney of Oxford, England", who named the planet; Solon was, or represented, an "egg-weight", which "presumably refers to some sporting contest rather than being a personal Humpty Dumpty-style 'ophter'"; examples could be multiplied ad lib. Very many of Room's derivations are, to say the least of it, dubious—after all, as he himself points out, many Greek names probably have non-Greek antecedents, and attempts at etymology or aetiology are vain; it really is much use to derive Cyzicus from "auxo" (usually "auxano"), meaning "oxal"? Of course, many names are transparent (Aspasia, Polydorus, Lndamas), and here Room is, so far as I can tell, an accurate guide to the list of the "mythical names" (like Zaid, Apollo, Athena, Aphrodite are useful, as is that of correspondences between Greek and Roman names. But Adrian Room's consideration of the relevance of the name "with regard to the life and deeds of its bearer" all too often leads him to pointless speculation, or special pleading, as when he suggests that Teres may be based on "telos" (stretch), perhaps referring to the tension, physical and metaphorical, that existed in his relationship with his father. And often, again, the "propitious" name of a hero or heroine is boded by the (dis)ma acts which he or she performs or suffers (think of poor Macbeth), who committed incest with his sister Canice, and who would have liked to be quoted Sir Dray's crisp description of the Greek "remove the Great at, beyond Ocean, unsought by men, sharing the eye and one both among three, and grey-haired from birth, in other respects not unhandsome" (Alcibiades). The *Partholach*, page 39.

## Geoffrey Wheatcroft

## Who's Who 1983

2,499pp. Adam and Charles Black. £42. 0 7136 2280 6

Sir Michael Tippett's entry in *Who's Who* includes the words "sent to prison for 3 months as a conscientious objector". He is probably—it would be rash to assert anything definitely about a reference book of 2,500 pages—tho only Who to give his previous convictions. Other Whos are lavish with different sorts of personal information but reticent in this matter.

Take for example four distinguished past and present legislators. Mr John Stonehouse tells us that he was "Granted citizenship of Bangladesh, 1972". Mr Ian Harvey that he belongs to the "London Soc. of Rugby Union Football referees". Lord Kagan that he has a "BCOM Ions (Textiles)" from Leeds. Lord Montagu of Beaulieu that he belongs to the "Disabled Drivers Motor Club"; but nothing is to be found about porridge.

This illustrates one of the two problems—failings would be too strong—of *Who's Who*: who is included, and what they are allowed to say or not to say about themselves. In some instances the two problems are the same. As is well known, Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn (also known as Viscount Stansgate, Tony Benn) disappeared from *Who's Who* like the Cheshire cat, until last year there was no more than a grin left under Stansgate, and nothing under Benn. Now he is back with a reasonably full entry, although it suppresses his education at Westminster and Oxford. There can have been nothing previously to stop the publishers from printing a formal entry—date of birth, constituency represented, offices held—with or without his permission; but *Who's Who's* principle is the cooperation of Whos.

Very few people refuse to appear in *Who's Who*, fewer by far than those who would like to be in but are not. One stay-out has resented. This year Mr Bernard Levin is in for the

first time, with a commendably straightforward entry (although it would have been more useful if instead of "Has written regularly or irregularly for many newspapers..." he had given some dates of when he worked for which). The editors, one suspects, might even be grateful for such diffidence as Mr Levin used to show. They have an acute pressure on space. Many categories of person are in *ex officio*: national newspaper editors, QCs, professors (all Oxbridge and London but not all plateglass), MPs and peers. The traditional scope extends widely. Not only are all peers in but also all holders of courtesy titles, even of secondary courtesy titles. Thus one Who is Viscount Ipswich, the five-year-old grandson of the Duke of Grafton; and the youngest Who of all is Lord Normanston's son, little Lord Somerton, born last September.

Given this pressure the choice of Whos is increasingly difficult to make, and perhaps unfairly it tends to look capricious. Journalists are better represented than they once were. But why, for example, among sports journalists are Mr Christopher Martin-Jenkins and Mr Ian Woollbridge in but not Mr Hugh McIlvanney? Why among general journalists Mr Patrick Cosgrave but not Mr Peter Kellner or Mr Richard West? Or among opera sopranos, why Miss Isobel Buchanan but not Miss Rosalind Plowright? Or among novelists, why Mr A. N. Wilson but not Mr Martin Amis? Or among doctors, why Mr Robin Lane Fox of New College but not Mr Norman Stone of Trinity? Versatility may be on advantage. Mr Barry Fantoni is in for the first time polymathically as "novelist, broadcaster, cartoonist, jazz musician", joining the rest of the *Private Eye* generation. Messrs Ingram, Bookor, Rushton, Waugh and Foot (but not so far Mr John Wells). And yet public fame is far from the only criterion. Professor John Vincent is a Who, but he turns out to be the one who occupies the Chair of Textile Technology at Manchester rather than the Bristol historian so well known to readers of all Mr Murdoch's organs from the *TLN* to the *Paper That Supports Out Boys*.

Once in, the Who has a wide discretion as to what he says about himself, or she about herself. The encyclopedia, then, is an index of architects, not like Barthes, Flotcher, a survey of styles; some large sections of architectural evolution remain blacked out. Yet at least there are a number of Ancient Greek architects whose names have survived, and as with himote, there is a big and excellent place on Vitruvius, one of the real heroes of architecture. This real hero of architecture, the study includes a detailed analysis of the principles of design, which governed the form of the Parthenon and the triumph of the order of Western architecture over the next 2,500 years or so. Handed down by that pillar of the Roman architectural establishment, Vitruvius (whose treatise on architecture is as exact and literal as boring), the principles that were put out at the Acropolis were rediscovered by Renaissance innovators. That the editors of this encyclopedia are the have encountered few problems—the name of the architect was important as it had doubtless been in Athenian Greece.

Two pieces on some of our favourite herbes, Brancaccio, Alberi, Michelangelo, Palladio, Wren, Bernini, Capallio Brown and Le Corbusier. A temple, built in luminous, a temple, built in luminous, brought to light by people, the achievements of such architects must normally appear, we find them from reading about their thoughts, the work is humanized, that we can see it, perhaps for the first time, the creation of a single artist, the painting or a piece of sculpture, for this reason, as much as any other, an encyclopedia must be regarded as a great contribution to an understanding of this universal art.

Presumably straight lies are impermissible and in any case *Who's Who* is the home of *suppression* rather than of *suggestio falsi*. Women tend to forget their dates of birth; in some cases they give the day and month but not the year, to remind friends about the cake rather than the number of candles. Men are sometimes absent-minded about their schools, either because they weren't grand enough or because they were too grand, as in the case of Mr Benn and his fellow Labour Member Mr Gile Radice whose manners marky pas over his days at Winchester.

The commonest oblivion of all is for former marriages. Many Whos omit to mention their first wives. Sometimes children are listed baldly—"four a two d"—with no hint as to the union which produced them. One gallant admitted mentions neither his first wife nor the two children she bore him. In any case, if *Who's Who* is to be rigorously informative it nowadays needs a section for "lives with". By contrast with this bashfulness about marriage and children Miss Jane Lapolais gets top marks for ruthless objectivity in describing her own birth: "a unknown father..."

In other words *Who's Who* is conducted on permissive lines. One someone has been chosen for admission they are free to use their entry to convey much what image of themselves they like. They may attempt humour, although one danger is that the joke will wear thin (the Switellian *Edue*: In the holiday home Elton" must have seemed funny the first time, but after thirty years... and another is that day-decades often goes before a fall. Mr Nicholas Fairbairn's recreations once read "Making love, ends meet and people laugh". He changed it pretty sharply; indeed it now reads "being blunt and sharp at the same time"—but what good did changing it do? Permissiveness may make the book less informative than it would be if greater control were exercised over entries (although it is hard to see how that could be done) but it is entertaining. In fact for a millionth information and entertainment there is no other reference book, not even *Widsen*, to compare with *Who's Who*.

## Barbara Goodwin

## JUSTIN WINTLE (Editor)

Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914: A Biographical Dictionary 209pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £18.30. 0 7100 9295 4

Justin Wintle's *The Makers of Modern Culture* was first published in 1981. It was the first volume to be published of a five-volume biographical dictionary promising "the fullest survey of our whole cultural history to date". *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture 1800-1914* is the second volume.

The pantheon visited here includes writers, statesmen, thinkers, musicians and artists, but also engineers, founders, explorers, industrialists and revolutionaries. This spread indicates the diversity of cultural activity, theoretical, applied and creative, which the last century produced. It also reminds us that, despite its reputedly distinctive (and, for us, Victorian) character, nineteenth-century culture was partly a postscript to the Enlightenment, concerned still with the "reason versus passion" debate and an abstract notion of progress, and partly a prologue to the twentieth century, centred on concrete scientific progress and artistic and philosophical reactions to the changes which it engendered. Often these two currents seem totally divorced, although Mr Wintle tries to camouflage the distinction as "the dialectic between tradition and innovation". The difficulty, as he admits, is caused by taking an arbitrary time-period and treating it as a cultural unity.

The biographies are intended to be interpretative rather than authoritative. But judgments such as "a poet Arnold ranks below Tennyson and Browning" conflate the two approaches. Problems of selection arise too, first and foremost, who will be left out? The dictionary claims to reflect "the significance of its subjects for us" (who?) and not to offer a

"historical reconstruction" of the epoch. The most famous names are self-selecting, but in the case of minor figures the inclusions show a definite Anglo-American bias. The choice of "makers" will reinforce most readers' cultural preconceptions—but then, presumably, the book aims precisely to include the famous names which the average English-speaking reader encounters.

If the length of an entry measures an individual's significance for us, then Marx, Darwin and Wagner come first (eight columns), with Cardinal Newman and Beethoven close behind. It seems remarkable that only twelve out of 491 "makers" were not European or American (fourteen, including one Zionist and one pope, who are unclassified, being, perhaps, supranational). Four of these are classified as heroes, reformers or revolutionaries. Clearly, Japanese artists apart, almost the only outsiders to penetrate our cultural consciousness were those who rebelled against "primitive" societies. The book is, then, Eurocentric (if America counts as a European offshoot) and, in places, unashamedly Anglocentric. For example, the French would probably not rate J. S. Mill as "a giant among modern thinkers".

The difficulty of making specialist knowledge accessible is tackled successfully by most contributors: the entry on Lobachevsky even sports a diagram to show how he refuted Euclidean geometry, and the pieces on scientists, composers and artists are comprehensible to non-specialists. Not so, many of the entries on writers, which subject us to the bedraggled peacock-tail of literary-critical terminology—see, for instance, Roger McLure's remarks on Baudelaire's evocation of "the distinctive tonality that accrues to beauty when it is pretentiousness goes to Duncan Fallowell, who says of Wilde's dream that there is the real world and there is the constructed world of art: 'this is Wilde's challenge to entropy and takes us beyond Nietzsche into the regions of Gurdjieff, Aleister Crowley, Castaneda's Don Juan, Wilde was... the first Modern in his knowledge of

the relative manifestation of absolute being."

The book abounds with cross-references, which sometimes lead to unnecessary rankings and forced comparisons. The references linking individuals to wider issues are instructive, but the thematic entries in the index seem randomly chosen and are not always helpful. If we judge by these, the essence of nineteenth-century culture was Romanticism, followed by Nationalism, Naturalism, Symbolism, Liberalism, Socialism and Positivism.

Although some entries seem to be written to order without expertise or enthusiasm, many are synoptic, scholarly and illuminating, and it is impossible to give all the contributors due credit here. In the field of political thought, the best contributions are those by Bernard Crick and Michael Biddis (although the latter should have said more about the utopian Fourier's "new amorous world", a significant text for post-1968 subculture). Often, these glimpses of past lives sharpen the curiosity, so that the concise bibliography following each entry is welcome.

The dictionary has two weaknesses. It rests on a definition of culture as something constituted by the achievements of an élite, a Euro-American republic of letters. Few industrialists, "applied artists", such. But these journeymen, who develop or transmit ideas and discoveries, are also important in fashioning a culture. Second, the whole project rests on a premise of cultural coherence, temporal and social, which is probably fallacious. Every encyclopedic work is based on a theory of knowledge, and different epistemological frameworks produce different fields of information. Here ideas are mediated through individuals, so that the dictionary is a guidebook to famous people, rather than a store of encapsulated knowledge. It fosters a questionably individualistic concept of culture. Posterity may read it as a statement of the *idées fixes* of the would-be academic pacemakers of the late twentieth century.

## Topmost people

## Steven Runciman

## R. F. TAPSELL

Monarchs, Rulers, Dynasties and Kingdoms of the World 511pp. Thames and Hudson. £18. 0 500 25085 5

Do you wish to know who was King of Ailech in 890 AD? It was Flathbertach mac Murchad. Or who succeeded Winiy I Rubembeka as Omukama of Bunyoro? It was Olimi I Kalimbi. Or what relation Peda Komati Venn of Kondevi was to his predecessor? He was brother's grandson via son. Such interesting facts can be learnt from this portentous book, which provides some 500 lists of rulers under 254 geographical headings, giving the kinship of each ruler to his predecessor and usually the date of his accession. The range is vast: 177 pages are devoted to Asian rulers, 125 to European, forty-four to African, three to American and one to those of the Pacific Islands. The lists are preceded by an alphabetical guide giving short entries about the various states and dynasties.

The intent seems to be to provide a world-wide coverage. But there are curious omissions. The Presidents of the United States are allowed in, but not the Doges of Venice, or any other Presidents. We have the Roman Popes and the Delai Lamas, but not the dynasty of the Aga Khan, whose pontificate is hereditary. Some of the German former sovereigns, such as Lippe, Reuss or Waldeck-Pyrmont are absent; and the choice of Indian maharajahs seems arbitrary. In the Balkans we hear nothing of the powerful if short-lived principality of Zachumia. The list of ruling families in medieval Greece omits the Despot of Lesbos, as well as the Despot of Mistra; and the Bagratids of Taron do not appear among the Armenians.

princes. The lists of voivods of Moldavia and Wallachia ends abruptly in the early seventeenth century, apparently on the grounds that thenceforward "they were no more than Turkish governors". One could perhaps maintain that view, though with modifications, about the eighteenth-century princes, but in the seventeenth century they were no more subservient than in most of the sixteenth.

It may be unfair to complain about not very important omissions, but in a book that aims to be complete the complaint is not irrelevant. One can complain more forcibly that many of the dates and even some of the names are doubtful. The author has certainly covered vast and varied fields in his reading; and his bibliography is impressive. But he never tells us how far he is relying on legend and tradition and how far on solid written sources. The historian is unwise if he entirely neglects tradition but still more unwise if he accepts it as proven fact. When dealing with the Moslem world, where genealogical tradition is usually reliable, R. F. Tapsell is on fairly safe ground. But are we to accept the definite existence of all the Irish kings of the dark ages or of all the rulers of the less literate states of Africa? He occasionally adds a question-mark to a date, and occasionally omits a date altogether. Very seldom indeed he admits to doubt. Even in the recorded history of Europe there are many questionable dates and even questionable names. For instance, his lists of the early rulers of Bosnia and Bulgaria are both open to question; and even in better-known parts of Europe many medieval dates are uncertain. The guiltless reader needs to be given a word of warning.

Had it been less ambitious in scope and more informative about its sources, the book could have been a useful help to budding historians. As it is, it combines great erudition with a rather endearing touch of fantasy.

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## Statutory state

## Christine Gray

## PAUL SIEGHART

## The International Law of Human Rights

209pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £18.30. 0 19 876096 5

The appearance of yet another book on human rights prompts the (unfair) selection that, had all the effort spent on human rights been more judiciously directed, more progress might have been made in their effective implementation. It is a particularly unfair selection in this case as Paul Sieghart is well known for his work for human rights and his book is designed to be useful.

The primary purpose of a book such as this one is that it should be a collection of the eight major rights instruments ordered according to their subject-matter. Because of limitations of space, Sieghart is not able to reproduce the relevant provisions of all the other numerous conventions on human rights but he provides cross-references to those where necessary. He adds textual commentary, discussion of the history of each article and brief references to the relevant jurisprudence. At the end of the book he includes tables showing the states which are parties to each instrument and the reservations (though unfortunately not the objections to them) that have been made. This provides a convenient collection of material not otherwise available in one place that will, in the majority of cases, help a lawyer to come to a preliminary conclusion as to whether there has been a breach of a treaty obligation. Clearly in borderline cases, where the distinction that Sieghart so strictly maintains between the law as it is and the law as it ought to be breaks down, this type of book cannot be of much assistance.

Nor does it give much guidance on customary international law, scarcely about half the total number of states are parties to comprehensive human

rights treaties, customary law retains some importance. There is still controversy as to its relation to treaty law in this area, and over questions such as the legal status of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For the revolution that has occurred in international law since the Second World War, through which human rights have come to be regarded as a matter of international concern, is incompletely reflected in state practice. The gap between the rhetoric of governments paying lip-service to human rights and their actual practice has not significantly diminished. We now have a large number of international declarations and treaties on human rights, the most important of which are high standards of their implementation that presents the main problem today.

Part Four deals with these procedural questions that lead out treaty provisions. On the one hand, it is established to deal with violations of human rights and outlines the procedures to be followed in the presentation of claims. (though a practitioner seeking detailed guidance will have to look elsewhere). What is very clear from these provisions (and is confirmed by the fact that the jurisdiction referred to in Parts Two and Three is predominantly European) is that an individual whose rights have been violated can expect effective redress only under the European and American Conventions, on Human Rights. This obviously affects the significance of the earlier sections on the institutions of the United Nations depend for their success in the protection of human rights on the cooperation of governments. In its essence the main hope for the implementation of human rights rests with regional institutions and non-governmental organizations.

little international law. Sieghart is apparently aware of the dangers involved in this type of very brief run-through of the historical and juridical background and the rules on participation in treaties, their domestic effect, supervision, interpretation, application and enforcement, but inevitably there are many oversimplifications and distortions. For example, it is a pity that he perpetuates the myth of international law as "primitive law".

The main section of the book (Parts Two and Three) is more worthwhile. This is a collection of the eight major rights instruments ordered according to their subject-matter. Because of limitations of space, Sieghart is not able to reproduce the relevant provisions of all the other numerous conventions on human rights but he provides cross-references to those where necessary. He adds textual commentary, discussion of the history of each article and brief references to the relevant jurisprudence. At the end of the book he includes tables showing the states which are parties to each instrument and the reservations (though unfortunately not the objections to them) that have been made. This provides a convenient collection of material not otherwise available in one place that will, in the majority of cases, help a lawyer to come to a preliminary conclusion as to whether there has been a breach of a treaty obligation. Clearly in borderline cases, where the distinction that Sieghart so strictly maintains between the law as it is and the law as it ought to be breaks down, this type of book cannot be of much assistance.

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# Power and the power of speech

Roy Harris

## PIERRE BOURDIEU

Ce que parler veut dire: L'économie des échanges linguistiques  
244pp. Paris: Fayard. 69fr.  
2213012164

In Pierre Bourdieu's writings on language and society we have seen for some years now the reddest of sociological flings being waved in front of the bull of modern linguistic orthodoxy. This spectacle, viewed from high up in the Anglo-Saxon stands, is not without entertainment value; but it is a curious spectacle indeed, and rather puzzling. For the bull appears supremely indifferent, while on the other hand the matador waves his flag from such a great distance that the bull could hardly be expected to be interested, let alone tormented. It looks like a ritual non-content choreographed by a director with a grimly off-beat sense of humour. Yet behind it all one senses that there is real blood waiting to be spilled if only the combatants would make a fight of it.

Bourdieu's critique of modern linguistics can, at the risk of oversimplification, be summarized as follows. From Saussure onwards, in Bourdieu's view, modern linguistics has been an intellectual con-trick. He sees — or thinks he sees — that Chomsky's competence is, in the final analysis, simply another name for Saussure's *langue*, and condemns the *fictio juris* by which Chomsky converts immanent laws of legitimate discourse into general norms of linguistic conformity. For Bourdieu, the postulation of a completely homogeneous speech community dogged the whole question of the socio-economic circumstances under which a linguistic competence of the Chomskyan kind could be established, and the "market conditions" which have to obtain in order to impose and maintain a distinction between right and wrong where grammar is concerned. As a result, linguists are misguidedly led to look to linguistic structure for constraints which in fact derive from the social conditions in which language operates. In short, they are obliged to *faire de la sociologie sans le savoir*.

Put like that, Bourdieu's objection sounds rather like the boring old Marxist question-time stand-by in linguistics seminars: "But what about power?" Well, what about it? The answer is that in reading Bourdieu one comes to see that the "What about power?" if interpreted in Bourdieu's sense, is not quite as boring a question as it sounds, and indeed is when asked by those who usually raise it. In spite of — or perhaps because of — Bourdieu's constant economic metaphors, one comes to see that power does not have to be construed directly and crudely in terms of economics or public politics. And once that intellectual blockage is removed, then the question of linguistic power and its relation to linguistic normativity is all-pervasive in every form of discourse, spoken or written. Parents have linguistic power over their children, and teachers over their pupils. Hence assumptions about power are built in to every attempt to construct a linguistic system from the viewpoint of the level of the language, whether it be the level of languages, dialects, jargons or styles. The notion of a completely homogeneous speech community becomes a nonsense, not for the reasons usually adduced by dissonant linguistic theorists, but because the notion of a speech community in which linguistic power is equally distributed among its members is incoherent. Furthermore, to defend the fiction as a theoretical idealization which is useful or essential for describing actual languages, such as English and French, makes about as much sense as claiming that, in order to describe a society's social system we need to assume that every member is equally wealthy.

This is the nub of what Bourdieu refers to as "the illusion of linguistic communion" which haunts our theorizing about language. He points out that before Saussure we had this illusion in the writings of Comte, who died in the year Saussure was born. Both use the same metaphor of a

linguistic *trésor*, a fund of language freely available for the use of the community and the individual. But the reality is otherwise. Verbal communication necessarily involves linguistic inequality. The *économie des échanges linguistiques* is an economy regulated by relations of symbolic power, which reflect the social power relations between interlocutors and groups of interlocutors. In short, there is no *lingue* to which all have equal access in virtue of being members of a linguistic community.

Modern linguistics, however, pretended that there was in order to set itself up in business as a bourgeois academic discipline. It postulated an autonomous *lingue* which could be studied and analysed without any reference to the social conditions of its production, reproduction and utilization. This decontextualization received different emphases in the hands of different theorists. Saussure emphasized the holistic properties of the system. Chomsky emphasized the formal properties of grammatical patterns. But the decontextualization brought about the same distortion of inquiry in all cases. Communication was rejected as a focus of study, because it was held to be merely a matter of "performance" or *parole*. Furthermore, it was dismissed anyway on the grounds of being simply a process of encoding and decoding, as if the sole activity in which the linguistic community was interested was somehow like the professional occupation of cipher clerks. The result in university departments of linguistics was what Bourdieu calls "philologism". Philologist he defines as "the theory of language which foists itself on people who have nothing to do with language except study it".

Bourdieu advocates a sociological critique of language which will replace such bogus theoretical abstractions as grammaticality, meaning and competence. The study of grammaticality is to be replaced by the study of the legitimacy of language, the study of meaning by the study of the value and power of speech, and the study of competence by the study of linguistic capital. Nothing less, in his view, will come to terms with the simple fact that language is first and foremost a *praxis*.

It is at this point to the spectacle that one begins to wish the matador would get a little closer to the bull. For there seem to be innumerable ways in which this particular line of attack on the theoretical foundations of modern linguistics could be pressed home. It may be that Bourdieu simply thinks that is someone else's job; but there is perhaps a more significant reason why I shall come to shortly. Whatever the reason, it is a pity that Bourdieu does not bother with any of the splendid illustrative material that lies at hand almost begging to be used in the service of his thesis. Take, for instance, the notion dear to Chomskyan linguistics and psycholinguistics that every competent speaker is equipped with a mental "lexicon". What is this lexicon? It is, put it plainly, a dictionary allegedly "internalized" in the brain somehow. It lists the vocabulary of a speaker's native language and defines the meaning of each word. But where did the idea of a monolingual dictionary come from? It is a relic of a pre-war struggle, which assumed a central importance at a particular phase in European history. The need to "learn the language" as Renaissance writers used to say, entailed the obligation of limiting the linguistic liberty both of individuals and of groups, and condemning certain usages as "incorrect". Incorrect by whose criteria? The answer in particular cases is not open to doubt. Anyone who examines the lexicographical history of the greatest monolingual dictionary of all cannot fail to be struck by the extent to which the compilers of the *Oxford English Dictionary* were operating a form of class-based censorship about what "correct" English was. From the *OED* to the modern psycholinguistic mental lexicon is not such a big step as it looks. Providing all English speakers with a mental lexicon is simply a second or third-generation theoretical endorsement of the

prescriptivism inherent in Victorian dictionary-making. It took only a hundred years for censorship to end up as science.

That is not all, however. The institutionalization of this concept of the word simultaneously proposed and propagated through the agency of dictionaries is itself a powerful instrument in enforcing an educational programme based upon the norms, expectations and tastes of a particular class. Words come to be seen as *inherently* right and wrong uses. The dictionary itself takes on authority, independently of its compilers, and imposes that authority on all strata of society. Arthur Scargill's dad, we have recently been told, reads his dictionary every day — an example of therapeutic piety which invites comparison with the once common practice of daily Bible reading. What exactly that has done to Scargill senior's mental lexicon nobody knows. But it can hardly have failed to inculcate belief in that *moi à toutes fins du dictionnaire* whose actual social existence Bourdieu explicitly denies. Belief in the lexicographer's word (in both senses) is an integral part of the powerful language myth on which modern linguistics is based, and which enables the dictionary entry to function as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For a craftsman so keenly interested in language, and one who can make very shrewd observations about the style of writers as diverse as Heidegger and Montaigne, Bourdieu is a dismal case of linguistic incompetence. His polemic prose moves with all the poise and agility of a matador with two left feet. This general ungainliness is emphasized rather than concealed by the occasional flourishes which are skillfully executed. He compares literary semiology to the prayer-wheels of Tibet (which works better in French

because of the echo from *moulin à prières* to *moulin à paroles*). Occasionally he produces phrases which have a kind of brutal beauty. Corner charm, like *le langage des animaux* *seul*. But for most of the time the reader is embarrassingly aware of a desperate effort to wring cumulative verbal effects out of the unpromising material provided by French sociological jargon. In the end, one cannot repress the uneasy feeling that Bourdieu, in spite of himself, is a kind of enlightened Whorfian, accepting linguistic imprisonment within a certain style of writing because he believes it unavoidable if he is to say what he wants to say, since that form of discourse alone makes available the concepts required for his message.

His envious glances at Heidegger point to the same conclusion. Perhaps the explanation lies in Bourdieu's obsession with the problem of linguistic legitimacy. For this, in an odd way, comes very close to Whorfianism in its least defensible form. (Those who object to this as a slur on Whorf are at liberty to substitute "pseudo-Whorfianism" for "Whorfianism" in the last sentence. We are here concerned with the Whorf of linguistic repute, not the Whorf of insurance reality.) Not that Bourdieu ostensibly has much time for Whorf: there is only one reference to Whorf in the book, and the index even manages to misspell his name. None the less Bourdieu occasionally makes remarks which have a Whorfian ring to them, as when he observes that ordinary language not only provides a reservoir of expressions potentially utilisable for poetic and philosophical games of various kinds, but also a reservoir of *formes de l'aperception du monde social*, wherein we can find the "principles of the vision of the social world which are shared by the whole group". In the same passage he

describes ordinary language as the product of the cumulative labour of thought dominated by power relations between classes. This links up with his remarks on style and on *le langage social*. Criticizing the language of an article by Etienne Balibar, he observes that within this mode of discourse there is concealed a metadiscourse which has no other function than to establish the intellectual and political importance of what the writer is saying. *Mais, muanda*, one could generalize this and draw from it the observation that every form of discourse must somehow employ metadiscursive devices which affirm its validity by indicating to the listener or reader how what it said is intended to be taken, and maintaining that projected intention as a consistent and plausible one. To the extent that discourse fails to do this, it invites dismissal as illegitimate or non-serious. In a word, it lacks authenticity, and producers *pro tanto* lose or fail to exercise linguistic power.

That may be why in the end Bourdieu refrains to the extent that he does from pressing his attack on the linguistic dogmas he so clearly rejects. For from his point of view these dogmas are in the final analysis protected by the very formalistic discourse in which they are embodied. Making no sense, except within the disciplinary confines of linguistics, they certainly make none outside. So he demonstrates in detail how and why they are mistaken would involve the attempt to criticize one whole form of academic discourse — that the standpoint of another form of academic discourse. Even if the conflict could be brought to close quarters, it would inevitably end in a stalemate. In this particular *comédie*, unless contempt can kill, the bull will live to ripe old age. Perhaps, altered, the laws of historical materialism have determined that the beast shall survive.

Norway, to handle simultaneously "temporal, geographical, social and linguistic continua", undoubtedly produce more interesting data than older dialect surveys, and show us, for example, that the linguistic influence of Larvik is transmitted nowadays by road communications, formerly by sea. But this only illustrates the "why" and not the "how" of young people changing their linguistic behaviour: mechanisms of change are handled with great delicacy so that what needs to be explained is more clearly defined. But still, I think, not explained. As Trudgill himself concludes, we simply don't know.

There is too much in this book of value to do justice to in a short review. The two studies of *Arvanitis* speakers around Athens and their gradual integration into the Greek-speaking community are interesting for sociological and linguistic reasons. It is a pity that questions of pigmentation and racialization were dragged in. Trudgill himself concludes, and does not flinch, and he has means to back up his conclusion, that he and his colleagues have been trapped into echoing some very dubious typological generalizations about language contact. If the distinction between non-racialized and racialized language change is valid, for example, something very funny happened either to the Chinese or the Indo-Europeans. The discussion of a distinction between simplification and reduction in linguistic systems stands on its own feet. In a lively and fascinating chapter he takes up the conflicting identity he takes up the hypothesis of a single language of *pop-groups*, the sections on language differentiation by sex and social class follow, serve to reinforce the underlying concept of a society's "identity": the covert prestige of working-class norms being somewhat self-reinforced, for example, by L. Milroy's work in Belfast.

Throughout this book Trudgill shows what can be achieved by close observation and close attention to detail, illuminated by insight into social processes. We are beginning to see, new models of language

change every child to become a little RP (Received Pronunciation) speaker. (If children want to, they will, if they don't want to, they won't.) By such means, Trudgill hopes — I share the hope — that we may return to an appreciation of linguistic and cultural pluralism in Britain.

On the first point, however, I find myself being doubtful as to the nature of his sociolinguistic "explanations". He is right to ask that diachronic historical linguistics and linguistic theory take notice of the findings and methods of sociolinguistics, and to criticize the Leads-based *Survey of English Dialects* for not doing so. He is right to try to improve sociolinguistic techniques, as in his chapters on linguistic change and diffusion and on vowel mergers. But I am not certain that the penetration provided by his "sociolinguistic" approach necessarily provides greater explanatory power. To begin with, the geographers' "gravity model" is an exploratory gambit for a research programme, nothing more; it calculates the supposed forces of interaction between two urban populations as proportional to the product of the two populations divided by the square of the distance between them. If this measure gives results which do not fit the facts (eg. of trade, of cultural influence, etc), new coefficients tend to be introduced on an *ad hoc* basis to allow for other factors. But in Trudgill's main example, linguistic influence, is handled as a one-way affair, from London to Norwich, and this is done by assuming that "interaction" consists of an influence on each direction proportional to population size. Trudgill's own footnote on page 83, about the "negative prestige" of New York, and the fact that "extraneous factors cannot be ignored", effectively destroys the value of the model (although not of his work). A small culture can exert great influence on other urban centres. If its influence is high, and gravitational models should in any case take into account multidirectional forces among bodies in orbit.

Again, the hexagonal mapping and sampling, undertaken in Southern

## Down by the riverside

### Virginia Llewellyn Smith

#### ANDREW R. DURKIN

Sergei Aksakov and Russian Pastoral  
231pp. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. £25.50.  
0 8135 0354 8

One good reason for writing a book on Sergei Timofeevich Aksakov in English is that no one has done it before; but someone certainly would have, were Aksakov really a major figure in the age of Russian realism, as this study claims. He is nowhere near equal in brilliance to younger contemporaries like Tolstoy and Turgenev; rather, his work glows like a nightlight, steady and comforting.

In the intellectual uproar of the 1840s Aksakov's sons Konstantin and Ivan became well-known supporters of the slavophile movement. The elder Aksakov was however — according to Konstantin — inadequately educated; and though he grew a beard to show solidarity with the cause, he evidently cared little for heated debate, preferring cards, amateur theatricals, shooting and fishing. These, it is here asserted, he treated as "self-valuable activities that had a serious aesthetic dimension". Certainly, when he started writing, late in life, Aksakov took seriously, and happily chose the subject-matter that was exactly right for him and for his readership. His first book, *Nates on Fishing*, went through several editions in his lifetime, which could indicate his stature as a writer, as it could also indicate the number of literate Russians who counted among his hobbies.

Outside Russia, Aksakov is known for his autobiographical trilogy (now being reissued in J. D. Duff's translation), *Family Chronicle* (see paperback in brief on page 527) describes his grandfather's feudal establishment in eastern Russia (a wild frontier in those days, though the *tsar's* marriage was unobtrusive), and his father's marriage. Two subsequent volumes deal with Aksakov's own childhood spent largely on the estate, and his education in Kazan. A dearth of sources other than the trilogy itself makes it difficult to ascertain how

much of the story is actually true. Andrew R. Durkin emphasizes Aksakov's aspirations to artistry and his use of literary models and devices, reaching the conclusion that the result was something between fact and fiction and that "the perceptive reader is forced to accept ambiguity and to recognize the unique status of the text in question".

This makes reading Aksakov sound harder work than it really is. He is in fact the most undemanding of writers, perfect for convalescent reading — perhaps because Sergei (young Aksakov) spends a lot of time in bed, tended by an adoring mother. The idealized portrait of her in *Family Chronicle* was written, we learn, when the middle-aged Aksakov was recuperating from illness. We learn too that, according to Ivan Aksakov, the mother ceased to love Sergei after he married; and that in later life Aksakov avoided revisiting his childhood home. It is plausibly suggested that Aksakov wrote the trilogy to fix in aesthetic form a lost world, remote in space and time: a golden age of rural tranquillity and harmony with nature. Aksakov is Russian pastoral. There is nothing quite like the trilogy in Russian prose, soon to be given over to strident concern with social issues and restless examination of the inner man.

Attempts by Dobrolubov and more recently by Soviet critics to drag Aksakov into the radical team are absurd. He is never subversive: in *Family Chronicle* the evils of serfdom are not concealed, but they are subordinated to the dominant impression of a stable society based on fixed categories and formulae. Durkin rightly stresses that there is a ritual element in the narrative which has its counterpart in the analytical viewpoint of Sergei's town-bred mother. He could also have said that the tension between two ways of life not only holds together the rambling recollections of Aksakov's own experience, but provides an emotional focus for his self-absorption.

As Sergei matures he comes to accept civilized urban society. Durkin makes the essential point that, unlike Tolstoy, Aksakov does not present childhood as an inherently desirable

state; but it is clearly outside his intended scope to explore the relation of Tolstoy's memoirs to Aksakov's, beyond suggesting Tolstoy as a possible influence. Any such comparison would not necessarily favour Tolstoy. A comment on children's use of language, quoted by Durkin, is wholly characteristic of Aksakov: entirely accurate, yet offered in an endearingly unacademic tone. Aksakov entirely lacks Tolstoy's insistency: his didacticism; but also, one feels, the imagination of genius: his *Recollections of Gogol* make it clear that he could never pin down so bizarre a bird, and he abandoned them unfinished, to concentrate sensibly on what he knew best — himself, his people and the natural world.

Aksakov, it is asserted, issues an invitation to the senses: the reader be addressed "is not the adherent of a critical school". This is clearly the case, and it is equally clear that Durkin is addressing the other sort of reader. Aksakov deplored the difficulty of

achieving a simple, unselfconscious style, and analysing that style brings its own problems. Durkin has plainly understood what inspired Aksakov, and his criticism on the level of detail is perceptive; but his method appears awkwardly adapted to his subject-matter, and his idiom is often painfully inappropriate to it (for example: Sergei's dawning apprehension that "the universal applicability of the model of the relations within the family... in fact not be valid"). Durkin has perhaps tried in place in too many quarters: it may benefit a few to have references at the foot of the page, but it would have been far better to have Russian quotations in Cyrillic, not transliteration; and why are translations given of some of them and not others, quite unystematically?

In the chapter entitled "The Strategy of the Hunter", Durkin seeks to show that by his deployment of narrative devices Aksakov makes the reader

participate in the essential pleasures of the chase. But surely, one of the pleasures mentioned is, or tension. It follows that *Notes of a Hunter* should provide excitement, and where else but in its descriptions of the kill? Yet the only such passage Durkin cites runs: "I tirelessly, daily went out after woodcock: November 6 I killed eight, on the seventh, twelve... and more of the same. One is forced to conclude that the wider appeal of these manuals is analogous to that of cookbooks of the informative, well-written sort: they offer the placid, sedentary enjoyment of an energetic process. The excitement of the hunt is lacking in this chapter and, less conspicuously, in Durkin's study as a whole. His broad theme — that Aksakov uses "memory, nature and art as a means of overcoming time" — is unexceptionable; but despite the complexity of the net he has cast, the old trout seems to have slid through one of its holes, escaping, one suspects, to a calmer backwater.

## Serving Queen Equality

### Kyril FitzLyon

#### N. G. CHERNYSHEVSKY

What Is To Be Done?: Tales About New People  
378pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.95.  
0 86068 2

What is to be Done?, the novel which Chernyshevsky wrote in 1862-3 while in prison on a political charge, is an excellent example of the effect third-rate literature can have on first-rate minds. Lenin, in a picturesque phrase, said he had been "ploughed over" by it, which involves a field ready to receive the seed for the coming harvest. Plekhanov, "the father of Russian Marxism", felt much the same and insisted that he was speaking for the best of his generation, who read the novel as if it were Holy Writ. Literature had long been considered in Russia more as an instrument for

spreading social ideas and ideals than as an art in its own right, to be enjoyed for its own sake, especially so in the latter half of the nineteenth century and particularly among "progressive elements". That Chernyshevsky's prose was stodgy, that the situations in his novel were artificial and far-fetched and the characters improbable and lifeless was accepted without a tremor as something not worth troubling about. Even the author's way of constantly apostrophizing his characters as well as the reader did not seem to matter. The medium very definitely was the message and the message of *What is to be Done?* was contained in the two answers that the question of the title prompted, one on the personal and the other on the public level.

On the personal level, the answer was to achieve freedom in personal relations and complete equality of rights and obligations between the sexes. Partly, perhaps, because in nineteenth-century Russia women's legal rights (property, custody of children, etc), however inadequate, were, on the whole, somewhat in advance of Western Europe, the novel dwells more on the need to change individual and private attitudes, emotions and morality than on the need to reform existing laws. It expressly recognizes that individuals are motivated entirely by self-interest — although presumably (even if Chernyshevsky nowhere says so) such self-interest should be wisely understood and interpreted. Women should work and not expect to be kept by their husbands; jealousy should disappear, as must family, and, especially, parental, tyranny; people should choose and change their marriage partners freely, *ménages à trois* (popular in Russian intellectual circles at the time) should be accepted as normal and even, on occasion, desirable.

On the public level, the salvation of the world lies in the abolition of class distinctions. On this principle, the heroine, Vera Pavlovna, starts one workshop after another, all of them immediately successful. The future of business enterprise obviously belongs to them. The more general future is revealed to Vera Pavlovna in one of her frequent dreams (her dreams are always instructive). The reign of Queen Equality, "when man recognizes woman as his equal", has begun — the reign of love, beauty, justice and aluminium. (The ideal metal, and of communal meals with "only five or six courses" (Chernyshevsky's idea of abstemiousness) — in a Crystal Palace, like "the palace that now stands on Sydenham Hill" (which Chernyshevsky saw when he visited Herzen in London), with old people and small children serving the hale and hearty workers, and being responsible for all household chores.

Chernyshevsky always found it difficult to finish his novels. So do his modern readers, but the task of his English-speaking readers is made no easier by having to cope with *What is to be Done?* in the appalling translation

produced precisely one hundred years ago by Benjamin R. Tucker. The American anarchist, who, like Bernard Shaw, besides being awkward, it is also inaccurate. In the key scene, when the heroines confess to her husband that she loves another man, the pronoun "you" is substituted for "him" and the confession is thereby changed into a passionate affirmation by her of love for her husband. The subsequent events come, therefore, as a surprise unplanned by the author. But at least Tucker did not go as far as his compatriots, Dole and Skidelsky, who admitted in the preface to their translation of the same book three years later that they had "slightly mended" (not to be it noted, merely "amended") the character of one of the principal male personages — the heroine's second husband — "better to suit the American ideal of man".

The present publication is not, as claimed by the publishers, the "original translation by Benjamin R. Tucker, expanded by Cathy Porter". It is a reprint of Ludmila Turkevich's drastically abridged (as well as revised) version of Tucker's translation for the Vintage Books paperback published by Random House in 1961. Four of the many passages omitted in that edition have been restored, fortunately, in Cathy Porter's much smoother translation. In a highly misleading note the publishers inform their readers that the four passages had been "censored from the original translation" as they were "considered too subversive in their sustained version of socialism". Censored by whom and at what stage? Unfortunately, Ms Porter has found it necessary in her new preface to confirm her publishers' note without explaining it. This implies that in her view not only was the Russian abridgement the result of censorship, but also that censorship in America was more stringent in the 1960s than in Russia in the 1860s when the novel was published in full (it has continued to be published in full there ever since).

Ms Porter lavishes very fulsome praise on both the novel and its author, but her acquaintance with either appears to be somewhat cursory. She seems unaware that many more passages have been cut in the present abridged version than the four she has re-translated, misnames one of the principal characters and repeats (with E. H. Carr in his introduction, Tucker in his translator's preface, both reprinted here, and the publishers in their note) that *What is to be Done?* was Chernyshevsky's only novel. In fact, of course, he had many more to his credit, including *The Prologue* so much admired by Lenin. However, Ms Porter's blunders (and E. H. Carr's, who adds a few of his own) can easily be explained: Chernyshevsky and his novels have, after all, long ago joined the formidable army of the Great Unread.

Louise and Aylmar Maude's translation of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* has appeared in The World's Classics series (1346pp., Vol. 1: 0 19 281582; 2: Vol. 2: 0 19 281614; 4 OUP paperback, £2.95 each).

## The Ukraine as utopia

### Arnold McMillin

GEORGE G. GRABOWICZ  
The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Shevchenko  
172pp. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. £8.75.  
0 674 67852 4

The unique status of Taras Shevchenko as the bearer and embodiment of Ukrainian national ideals has long required re-examination outside the by now thoroughly polarized and entrenched interpretations of (mainly Soviet) nationalists and (mainly Western) socialist ideologues. George Grabowicz, rejecting superficial and narrow concentration on the metaphorical or mythic dimensions, finds the key to Shevchenko's paradoxical literary heritage in the code of myth, and it is to the deep structure of myth in his Ukrainian poetry that this valuable and interesting study is devoted.

Professor Grabowicz begins by very properly distinguishing between the author of Ukrainian poetry to whom he refers as Shevchenko's "unadjusted self" and the writer of poems; a diary, however, and plays all in Russian, as well as Ukrainian prose and correspondence in both Ukrainian and Russian, representing the writer's "adjusted self". The Ukrainian poetry in fact relates to only a small part of Shevchenko's mature life, but for all its simplicity it is precisely here that the most important myth is generated and

indeed many scholars, is precisely the one projected by his poetry: of Shevchenko the martyr and prophet living only for and through his people. This has become the real Shevchenko. He has become, to paraphrase Claude Lévi-Strauss, the product and hero of his own myth.

In approaching Shevchenko through the code of his myth, the author of this study is consciously setting aside many important aspects of the poet: not only consideration of his "adjusted" self, and of the other major code operating in the poetry, that of psychology, but also all aesthetic judgment. His focus on the poet's mythical thought is deliberately narrow, but clarity is maintained throughout and, at the end of the book, conclusions of broad implications for the Ukraine are convincingly presented.

After an opening chapter on Shevchenko's duality, followed by a study of history and mythology in his poetry (mythology because the historical or quasi-historical material is subordinated and incorporated into the structure of myth), in the central third chapter Grabowicz discusses myth as it is worked out through various characteristic themes such as that of "unfortunate lovers", and the family (which in Shevchenko's poetry never functions as an effective unit, being co-opted rather by illegitimacy, incest, patriarchy and matricide), going on to what he sees as the basic and polar opposition between *canon* and *myth*, and structure. The latter model is treated both on a universal plane and with specific reference to Shevchenko. In each case Shevchenko's sympathy is clearly with the marginal, victimized, or otherwise disadvantaged who, to the modern Ukraine can be regarded as forming a *central community*, whilst structure — for Shevchenko always evil — is seen in



# The scrupulous rescuer of death

Thomas Sutcliffe

NICHOLAS BORN

The Deception  
Translated by Leila Vennewitz  
238pp. John Calder. £11.95  
(paperback, £6.95).  
0714539759

In a recently published collection of interviews Graham Greene was asked about the distinction between his journalism and the novels he had written about the places he reported from. "To go to write a news story is something of a holiday for me; a novelist is a creature without scruples, which is tiring. The novelist's station is on the ambiguous borderline between the just and the unjust, between doubt and clarity. But he has to be scrupulous. . . . He stands for the victim and the victims change. This obliges him to violate his faith or his political opinions."

Nicholas Born's involved and fascinating novel *The Deception* is about the difference between journalists and novelists, but stands on the other side of Greene's borderline. In a territory where scrupulousness has become pathological. As writing about writing it takes the risk of falling into self-protection; but it succeeds because it is ardently intelligent about its subject and because it

presents with such clarity the incomprehensions of the central character, a liberal journalist called Laschen writing about the civil war in Beirut.

The novel was made into a film, *Circle of Deceit*, last year. This attracted some criticism at the time for trading on the glamour of the street battles it depicted, while at the same time affecting to question that glamorization in news reports. In the book Born is careful to describe his scenes of war with the studied tone of reportage, but it is not his intention to write a treatise on the inadequacy of the media. The book gives us what the film couldn't — Laschen's endless ratiocination about his failing marriage, his love affair with a German expatriate in Beirut and his own professional failings. What on screen was a taciturn and unexplained disgust is here a constant nagging. We never really share Laschen's writing, the object of this consuming criticism, except in Born's brisk dismissive paraphrase, which emphasizes the sense that his articles aren't communications but collections of artifacts of postures. "Either the sentences didn't grip, contained nothing of any substance, or it all sounded like a series of anecdotes told with a maximum of self-indulgence." The anxiety starts before he confronts the horrors of the civil war, when the adequacy of all words, not just his own, is put to the test, but it increases as his

stay in the city lengthens. At times it becomes suspiciously sophisticated, not merely a matter of workmanlike disquisition. "How he hated rescuing death, which was a kind of oblivion, into a continuation of life, which was a continuation of reading, a cannibalism, a being there without being." It sounds as though Laschen has picked up some of his funk from reading contemporary literary criticism.

This is, in fact, the first deception that he practises upon himself; that journalism is in the same category as literary fiction. He sits in the Hotel Commodore as miserable as Flaubert. Henry James wrote, "Flaubert's case was a damn because he felt of his vacation almost nothing but the difficulty." Laschen forgets that what Flaubert was an act of faith, a sacrament to be observed, is, for the journalist, an apostasy. Laschen forgets too that while journalists can never be perfect, they can be good, something which the novelist never has to admit. Even if novels are expected to provide despatches from dangerous fronts, the skirmishes remain invented, detached from obligations to particular suffering. Laschen on the other hand is disabled by concern — for his editors, his readers and the objects of his journalism. His objectivity, that awkward piece of journalistic equipment, is a delicate instrument, hardly suitable for dealing with the

brutal complexities of massacre and reprisal. "Laschen, even when he was quoting verbatim, always replaced the term 'Fascist' with 'Falangist'." — The dispassionate scruple obscures the very thing it wants to reveal.

Laschen also becomes involved in another and more dangerous misconception. He fancies himself the mechanical simplicity of the snipers in the wrecked hotels, aiming their guns with certain and directed actions, and longs for the yes/no choice of the trigger. A gun, after all, can never say "on the other hand". Laschen does have a knife, and he eventually uses it in a fumbled *acte gracieux* while sheltering in a cellar from bombardment. But the old Arab he stabs may have been dead already, and there is no chance of detection in the general carnage; even his decisiveness is clouded by doubt.

Laschen's fascination with the street fighters childishly misses the point. He sees his disgust with writing and his despair as bound up with disgust at his own assumed cowardice. Born shows that his real cowardice lies not in avoiding the dangers of the street but in relinquishing his duties with words, in deserting what Greene rightly calls "a station", with its overtones of military obligation. Anything is better than Laschen's dispiriting confusion, even the canonical cliché "Words cannot describe . . .". The phrase says lip service to the tradition that style and

emotion are inimical, but in fact words are generally sufficient to describe and even if they aren't, they are all we have.

Hemingway once wrote of the same anxiety: "There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. . . . Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates." On this score Laschen knows more. He has one moment when his writing (about a massacre in Damour) comes free and unforced: "This text no longer implied in any way that the reader was being exhorted or educated or improved by factual information." He pins down exactly the presumptuous familiarity with which such names as "Chailat", "Hamra Street" and "Skion" can now be used, a substitution of facts for knowledge. If you are going to despair about language you can't really trust names any more than abstract concepts. Hemingway was of course conspicuously able to write a book in which "good" and "courageous" had their place, but that was because he was a novelist. Laschen is altered at the conclusion of the novel that he fails to choose the right escape route from the inertia which his journalism has forced upon him.

## Dung on the boots

David Coward

EMILE GUILLAUMIN

The Life of a Simple Man  
Edited and introduced by Eugen Weber  
Revised translation by Margaret Crosland  
195pp. Sinclair Browne. £9.95.  
0 86300 011 8

*La Vie d'un simple* would be worth reviving, even without the current French vogue for the taped and ghost-written memories of nonagenarians who can still remember the coming of the motor car as though it were yesterday. The present nostalgia may be directed at the high-fibre, low-calorie good-lifer, but also has claims to be social history. The market has changed little since 1900 when middle-class novelists went among country folk and returned with a mixed bag of tales of the sad, earthy, rapacious peasantry.

But the genteel novelist did not have it all his own way. With the spread of elementary education, the peasants began telling their own stories. Emile Guillaumin's hero has sharp words for the popular author who arrives, notebook in hand, ready to jot down naive country sayings for the dialogue of his next money-spinner, and Guillaumin himself was one of a growing band of self-taught writers anxious to set the record straight and influence political decisions by publicizing the plight of the poor.

Guillaumin lived all his life in the village of Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, born in 1873. At the age of twelve he left school and worked on the family smallholding — reading, Flaubert, Buffon, and Lamartine — on winter evenings. With a few poems and a volume of country impressions under his belt, he persuaded the Dreyfusard publisher Stock to share the costs of printing his first novel, *La Vie d'un simple*, in 1904. It was well received and, put up for the Prix Goncourt which was given, however, to Fabrice Igué's reportage, *La Mairie*. Guillaumin went on to write six other novels, all dealing with the class of towns and country realities, and attempted unsuccessfully to launch peasant federations in his native Bourbonnais. After the First World War he took up journalism and flirted with politics but was not to be tempted away from his roots. He died in 1953.

*The Life of a Simple Man* is a fresh, canny and clear-eyed novel. It follows the life of Etienne Bertin from his birth in 1823 through to the late 1890s. More thoughtful than some, less intelligent

than many, Bertin recalls his life from the time when politics consisted of rumours of what the city-folk were doing, to the modern age when government was beginning to influence the daily lives of working people. His country is not that of the historian; the dates he remembers are 1847 (for its bad harvest), 1861 (for a broken leg and half-ridden crops) and 1870 (when conscription left him short-handed). It is a century of wolves, rye-bread as hard as conkers, clogs, cloth-floors and beads. Friends and relatives died in childbirth, or old age, strokes, or in distant lands. Between natural hazards and the attentions of the rapacious owners of the *industrial* he works. Etienne raises a family, labours on and grows old. Poor, ignorant, and increasingly aware of his poverty and ignorance, he lives with quiet resignation, taking consolation where he can find it, having no illusions about

justice or God or politics. Tiennon is a survivor, and his tale, in spite of the occasional lurch into sentimentality, is told with quiet dignity. As Eugen Weber suggests in his helpful Introduction, Guillaumin was more an observer than a novelist, but in this, his first — and best — novel, his attack on the *industrial* system and those whom it profited is managed with considerable insight.

The text used is the 1922 version "improved" and slightly abridged by Guillaumin himself. Little is lost, though Tiennon's main objection to socialism — that it assumes a degree of human perfectibility belied by his experience — is omitted. The translation is uneven, a mix of an earlier, inaccurate rendering and Margaret Crosland's "substantial alterations". Even so, Tiennon's memoirs emerge as the book of an honest man.

## Ageless and modern

Gabriel Josipovici

ALEXANDROS PAPADIAMANTIS

The Murderess  
Translated by Peter Levi  
127pp. Writers and Readers. £5.95.  
0 904613 94 1

It is books such as *The Murderess* which remind us of the miraculous nature of prose fiction. Here, in less than a hundred and thirty pages, a world of ancient Greek culture and a modern Greek prose fiction, it was written in 1903 and, as the above bald summary suggests, the three strands that make up modern Greek culture are united in it: an ageless peasant culture, a modern Greek culture, and a modern Greek prose fiction.

An old woman is sitting up through the night to look after her sickly grandchild while the mother snatches some sleep. In her weariness she goes over her life and convinces herself of the injustice of bringing girls into the world; girls have to be provided with dowries, which ruins their parents, and they bring nothing in return. Surely God did not mean this to be so. Would it not be a blessing for all if the sick child were to die? And so she leans forward and, senses the life out of the little girl. Once this is done she has set out on her path. Whoever she comes across, girl children she has usually successfully to displease, then, gradually, the authorities grow suspicious, and she herself starts, incomprehensibly, to feel pangs of

guilt. She flees up into the mountains, but the village police pursue her, and she dies "at the passage of the Holy Saviour on the neck of sand that links the Hermitage rock with dry land, halfway across, midway between divine and human justice."

*The Murderess* is probably the best-known work by one of the founders of modern Greek prose fiction. It was written in 1903 and, as the above bald summary suggests, the three strands that make up modern Greek culture are united in it: an ageless peasant culture, a modern Greek culture, and a modern Greek prose fiction.

Alexandros Papadiamantis, who himself trained for the ministry before becoming a writer, is well aware of the fact that this is not a matter of superposition, but something which has redefined the fabric of the peasant culture, making it different from that of Homer or Euripides. But the effect is still of something direct and primitive, and the mode of narration reflects this. It is stark, often clumsy, often moving, unlike anything in English (though Hardy is invoked in the Introduction). The idiom is a combination of the elements of oral story-telling and the Orthodox liturgy, which must have been a nightmare to translate, and large Peter Levi seems to have done an admirable job.

## Sword for hire

John Melmoth

ASHLEY AASHEIM

The Apostate  
240pp. Frederick Muller. £8.95.  
0 584 31158 3

The Victorian "pennant" for Tennysonian "talk of knightly deeds" was fed by a ceaseless insistence on the glamour and altruism of chivalric traditions. In the twentieth century such sentimentality has proved unpalatable. The protocols of courtly love have been exposed as an elaborate justification of adultery. King Arthur has been reduced to a gung leader plundering the margins of Roman Britain and the itinerant bands of knights which devastated Europe have been recognized as a danger to public safety comparable with the ravages of the Black Death. *Le chevalier* is no longer expected to parade his virtuous *sans peur et sans reproche*.

Don Francisco del Valle, a member of the Castilian chapter of the Order of St John, the hero of *The Apostate*, brings to knight errantry an unprecedented self-consciousness and ambivalence. He is provokingly ambivalent about his chosen profession of arms. Fighting a rear-guard action against the Turks on Tripoli's battlements, he is stunned and crucially fails to intervene when Janissaries slice up one of his comrades. This moment's hesitation, which he is unable to account for cowardice, branded *El cobarde*, he is excommunicated and pursued through the rest of the novel by the psychopath the Boker, brother of the dead man. In accordance with the conventions of the Western (the moral and topographical parallels are numerous) he becomes a paid killer, a sword for hire. For fifteen years he wreaks slaughter on behalf of the highest bidder, even fighting for the Huguenots, which piece of apostasy is condemned by the Spanish Inquisition.

His picaresque adventures bring del Valle into apparently mind-expanding contact with brigands, actors and a clutch of tavern low-lifers who mysteriously confirm his growing conviction that there is more to life than cutting people in half with his broadsword. Nevertheless, in fulfilment of a vow, he sets sail for Malta, pledged to resist Suleiman's incursions into Europe.

Travelling this swashbuckling narrative is the theme of del Valle's passionate attachment to his wife Mariana, and at one point he is briefly reunited with her, the ostensible purpose of their trip is an exploration

of sexuality in prose which the well-disposed might regard as lushly sensuous. Its real significance, however, is the opportunity it provides for both of them to be briefly subversive of the code by which he continues to live. Francisco, insistently self-denigrating, describes himself as "a good butcher", "a war machine", "an appendage to a scything blade", Mariana, proto-feminist, "a male intellectual composed of the 'mild' young bloods of England, the fast livers, the furious drivers" are magnificent, the machines hardly less so. This is the work of an impassioned, civilized, patriotic man; glamour and romance — there was no shortage of French girls reluctant to let young warriors go to almost certain death with no experience of love — are balanced by sombre reflection on human waste and folly, the "poetry" of the dawn patrol by the poetry of the suicidal recklessness in this most chilling form of warfare. The methods seem almost absurdly rudimentary, the odds against survival appalling (average life-expectancy for a pilot in action was two or three weeks); this was, of course, the attraction for men of Lewis's temperament and career.

Heavily of Buchan and Biggles rises from every page, but the excitement of facing extreme danger day after day and meeting the challenge with exceptional skill and nerve has never been evoked more compellingly, or with a better eye for detail, than by this wartime ace who went on to become a pioneer of long-distance flight and a distinguished civil aviator.

Thrillingly acknowledging that the milieu with which he deals is unlikely to be familiar to most readers, he is reluctant to lecture, he is obliged to sneak a certain amount of historical information into his dialogue. This rather creates an impression that conversation was as important to Lewis as the answers to principally of questions — "How long which they already knew" — or have we been besieged? — reminders of events scarcely likely to have been forgotten — "You slaved in the oars of his galleys when you were captured." Even at times of personal danger, they are inclined to be pedantically over-informative: "As Captain of the Castilian League, I have to join the Grand Master to fight by his side on the west wall."

Entries are invited for the 1983 Schiller Prize for Fiction. The prize of £5,000 will be awarded to the author of the best full-length, unpublished novel which combines "high literary merit" with a strong social and political commitment to the often retrospective quality of the much contemporary literature. The prize is sponsored by Sinclair Research Ltd and administered by the National Book League, closing date for entries is July 31, 1983. Further information and entry forms are available from the National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

Architecture

STEEN EILAR RASMUSSEN. *London, The Unique City*. (Revised Edition). 468pp. MIT Press. £25. 0 262 68027 0. Rasmussen, a Danish architect, wrote his classic study of London in 1934 and it first appeared in his own English translation in 1937 (when it was reviewed in the TLS of March 6). He argues his vast quantity of material into a cogent and strongly most explication of the growth of the city, which he characterizes as "scattered", rather than "concentrated" on the Continental model. His conviction of a profound link between the English character and the individualism of such planning has the questionable boldness of an outsider's value, but the abundance of photographs and figures gives vivid and circumstantial support to every turn of his argument. The 1937 edition concluded with a stern warning that "at the end of a few years all cities will be equally ugly and equally devoid of individuality. This is the bitter end." Now, though, he has added an "Essay on the New Towns, Modern and Ancient" as a "More Happy Ending" and a further illumination of his concept of the scattered city.

A.J.G.H.

Aviation

Cecil Lewis. *Sagittarius Rising*. 265pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 004367 5. First published by Peter David in 1936 with a second edition in 1966 (reviewed briefly in the TLS of February 17, 1966). Cecil Lewis was seventeen when he joined the RFC soon after the outbreak of the First World War; by Armistice Day he was deemed fit to lead a crack squadron; he recounts the events of the years between — training, action on the Somme, postings to England as a test pilot, more aerial combat, the defence of London, a final posting in Tyne in the aftermath of devastation — in cracking style. The RFC attracted the adventurous spirits — the devil-may-care young bloods of England, the fast livers, the furious drivers" are magnificent, the machines hardly less so. This is the work of an impassioned, civilized, patriotic man; glamour and romance — there was no shortage of French girls reluctant to let young warriors go to almost certain death with no experience of love — are balanced by sombre reflection on human waste and folly, the "poetry" of the dawn patrol by the poetry of the suicidal recklessness in this most chilling form of warfare. The methods seem almost absurdly rudimentary, the odds against survival appalling (average life-expectancy for a pilot in action was two or three weeks); this was, of course, the attraction for men of Lewis's temperament and career.

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on the grounds that the opportunity to escape from a battle might impair their resolve (the Germans were slow to parachute yet were not notorious for "funking" in a fight), and with limited understanding of tactics, to pursue obscure objectives. The result, Mr Winter suggests, contrary to the official statistics, was that British losses were considerably greater than German losses.

A.R.

Bibliography and Memoirs

SEGEI AKSAKOV. *Years of Childhood*. Translated by J. D. Duff. 318pp. Oxford University Press. £2.95. 0 19 281574 1. First published in Russian in 1858, this translation was published in 1915 and reviewed in the TLS of February 4, 1916. It is difficult to disagree with Lord David Cecil's judgment in the Introduction: "The first thing to be said about this book is that it is one of the world's few literary masterpieces; far more unrivalled, the best book of childhood reminiscences I have read." It is difficult too, to say exactly what it is that is so very remarkable about Sergei Aksakov's *Family Chronicle*, of which *Years of Childhood* forms the second part, covering his own earliest years. Surely completely unpretentious honesty of expression, and a strangely unself-conscious delicacy of manner, cannot in themselves amount to art? Yet that seems to be what happens in this book. It is not Aksakov (1791-1858) the man but Serezhka the child whom we encounter. The three parts of the *Family Chronicle* can be read independently. *A Russian Gentleman*, a sensational success on its first appearance in 1846, was republished in paperback by Oxford last year. *A Russian Schoolboy* is to follow.

G.S.

JOHN ARLOTT. *Fred: Portrait of a Fast Bowler*. 198pp. Methuen. £2.95. 0 413 52390 X. Asked for a title for this book, Trueman suggested "Defiant Volume of Fred's Blood". This characteristic suggestion was not taken up by Arlott for his acclaimed biography of one of the great performers of English cricket but *Fred*, first published in 1971 by Methuen and now reissued with a postscript, is a worthy tribute to this complex Yorkshireman — honest in its criticism as well as affectionate in its praise: "he could bowl his heart out — or turn it in; he can be harsh — or gentle; he can be genuinely witty — and horribly crude; almost hysterically funny — and a complete bore . . .". Trueman is a man of many surprises and Arlott ends his postscript with a fitting epitaph for this engaging and infuriating man: "Fred Trueman, man who surprised — even himself."

A.J.H.

KATHLEEN WOODWARD. *Jipping Street*. 151pp. Virago. £2.95. 0 86068 390 7. C. Carolyn Steedman's introduction to *Jipping Street* describes the book as "a psychological account of growing up female and working class". Allowing for the 1980s gloss applied to a book which was first published in 1928, the description sums up the interest such books have for us nowadays. In fact "Jipping Street" itself, replete with characters, "Blind" Dan Neill, the barmaid of The World On Its Toes, social snobberies and cautionary tales did not exist. It is a composite of different streets in different parts of London and the events in the book (which consists of ten sketches of local life) are, similarly, fictional accounts rather than straight recall. These indications of the author's craft — not least her rather overwrought style and her philosophical musings ("I got up in the mornings, and each fresh morning there was a quality of eager promise in the day before me.") are precisely the successful aspect of the book. What remains in the memory is a precisely cold, vulgar, violence and drunkenness which the author sought to escape.

L.D.

For much of the war the RFC (later the RAF) was a badly managed affair. For most pilots were killed in training before they were sent to the front. The British piloted the bulk of the search for combat but the RAF had progressed to less than halfway through their training when the war ended. The RAF was a disaster, laying claim to 10,000 pilots, many of whom were killed, without parachutes.

History  
PAUL M. KENNEDY. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. 405pp. Macmillan. £6.95. 0 333 35094 4. Alfred Thayer Mahan's classic *The Influence of Sea Power on History* in 1890, when the Pax Britannica was at its zenith. British naval mastery and

## Paperbacks in brief

world-wide Empire have since built passed into history, and Professor Kennedy attempts to discover whether this development accords with the "laws" promulgated by Mahan. To do so he examines the rise and fall of British naval and imperial predominance in the economic, political, technological and diplomatic contexts of the last four centuries. The resulting *tour d'horizon* is admirable in its breadth and clarity, and in its sure comprehension of the issues — few will fail to increase their understanding of our Island Story by reading this book. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* was first published by Allen Lane in 1976 (reviewed in the TLS of August 20, 1976) and the author concludes this paperback edition with judicious reflections on the Falklands War and on the current predominance of the United States.

N.

E. LE ROY LAURIE. *The Territory of the Historian*. 345pp. Harvester. £7.95. 0 7108 0413 X. This collection of articles, translated by Ben and Sinn Reynolds, first published in 1979, contains most of the material included in *Le Territoire de l'historien* (Gallimard, 1973). Written between 1965 and 1972 these articles reflect Le Roy Ladurie's chief contributions to historical research and are grouped in four sections: "The Quantitative Revolution in History", "New Directions in Rural History", "Medieval Evidence. Changing Attitudes and Historical Demography" and "The Climate as a New Province of Research". In his preface, the historian thinks specialists from other fields — anthropologists, botanists, climatologists etc. — with whom he collaborated in certain articles and whose assistance in expanding the historical territory he gratefully recognizes. A version of the article entitled "From Waterloo to Cloyton" appeared in the TLS on September 8, 1966.

E.W.

WALTER BELTZ. *Gods and the Gods: Myths of the Bible*. Translated by Peter Hefner. 280pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 022192 1. First published as *Got und die Götter* by Aufbau-Verlag Berlin und Weimar in 1975, it sets out to do for the Judeo-Christian cosmos what

Robert Graves did for the Greeks in *The Greek Myths*. To create a "mythology" of the biblical corpus is, however, a far less straightforward undertaking than it might at first seem. Mr Belz's technique has been in vogue since various key biblical texts or themes — "The Priestly Account of Creation", "Wandering in the Wilderness", "The New Age" etc. — and then add his commentary in which, as he puts it, he "tries to determine the original form and meaning of the myths and to elucidate them as far as possible, by means of literary analysis and the history of religion". Mr Belz has had to disentangle the "biblical myths" from their religious function, believing that on that level "the modern mind can only view them as false". He sees the biblical texts as showing that the one God "is only a sort of fascinating curtain behind which many gods, once part of the lives of various tribes and peoples, play out their drama" and he considers that "the enduring meaning of biblical mythology may be found not least in its god/man dialectic". There will be many people who will disagree with both the methods and the conclusions of Mr Belz's work.

M.T.

MARTHA GELLHORN. *Travels with Myself and Another*. 284pp. Eland Books. 53 Eland Road, London SW11 5JX. £3.95. 0 907871 35 6. Stationary travel, writes Martha Gellhorn, is what she loves: just a typewriter, scenery and furnished quarters in any of the fifty-three foreign countries she has visited over forty years but now has great difficulty in remembering. *Travels with Myself and Another*, first published in 1978 by Allen Lane, is about active travel, a choice selection of what Martha Gellhorn calls "horror journeys" — to wartime China (with an unidentified companion, in fact Henningway) and the Caribbean, Moscow, and across Africa. Whether heald in a native sloop off Anguilla, rebelling against a Chinese village latrine, coping with the rigours of Russian hospitality clerks, Nadia Mandelstam or nannying a scared Kikuyu guide past lion and elephant in a rattling Land Rover, Gellhorn brings to her unscintillating journeys humorously exact observation of what the exotic places of the earth can dish out to the lone traveller.

J.K.L.W.

## Among this week's contributors

DAVID ALEXANDER is Michael Bromberg Junior Research Fellow in the History of Art at Wolfson College, Oxford.

JOHN BATCHELOR's *The Edwardian Novelists* was published last year.

MARY KATHLEEN BENET's books include *The Character of Adaption*, 1976, and *Writers in Love*, 1977.

MOSCO CARNER is the author of *Alban Berg*, 1976.

MARTIN CHADLER's *Praefatio in Brinnin*, 1914-1945, *The Defining of a Faith* was published in 1980.

ANNIE CHISHOLM's biography of Nancy Cunliffe, *The World of Nancy Cunliffe*, was published last year.

TOM DISCH's most recent book, *Burn This*, was published last year.

HOWARD BRINKIN-HILL's *The Augustan Idea in English Literature* will be published shortly.

KVRL FRITZLYON's books include *Before the Revolution*, 1978.

ROY FOSTER's *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* was published in 1981.

STEPHEN GARDNER's *Kiwaki: The Making of a City and Inside Architecture* will both be published later this year.

JOHN GOUGH is joint editor of the *Journal of Strategic Studies*.

BARBARA GOODWIN is a lecturer in Political Theory and Philosophy at the Department of Government at Birmm University.

VIRGINIA GUEWILLIY-SATHI is the author of *Anton Chekhov and the Lady with the Dog*, 1981.

NORMAN HAMPSHIRE's *Will, Circumstance: Montesquieu, Rousseau and the French Revolution* will be published shortly.

ROY HARRIS's books include *The Language Myth*, 1981. He is Professor of General Linguistics at the University of Oxford.

SIA HAROLD HOBSON is on Honorary Fellowship of Oriel College, Oxford.

MICHAEL HOFMANN's poem have appeared in *Poetry Introduction* 5.

SIR DAVID HUNT is the editor of *Photographs in Cyprus: An Illustrated History*, 1982.

ANNE HUNTER's book, *Emergency: British Governments and strike breaking since 1919* which was published earlier this year.

JONATHAN KEATES teaches English at the City of London School.

PAUL KENNEDY's *The Realities behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy 1865-1980* was published in 1981.

D. M. KNIGHT's books include *Natural Science Books in English 1600-1900*, 1972.

J. H. C. LEACH is a Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford.

R. B. LE PAGE's *The National Language Question: Linguistic Problems of Newly Independent States* was published in 1984.

A. L. LE QUERRIE's *The Bodily Concoction* will be published shortly.

CHRISTINE GRAY is a Fellow of St Hilda's College, Oxford.

CYRIL MANGO's *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* was published in 1980.

ANOBEL MCMILLAN is Professor of Russian at the University of Liverpool and author of *A History of Byelorussian Literature from its Origins to the Present Day*, 1977.

ROY PORTER's most recent book is *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 1982.

CLAUDIE RAWSON's *Gulliver and the Gentle Reader: Studies in Swift and Our Times* was published in 1973.

HELEN RUBINSTEIN is currently editing *The Oxford Book of Marriage*. She is a former Chairman of the London Marriage Guidance Council.

CAROL RUMENS's collection of poems, *Unplayed Music*, was published in 1981.

SIR STEVEN RUNCIMAN's *Mistral* was published in 1980.

WILLIAM T. STEARN'S *The National History Museum at South*